SUPERIOR FAT LOSS

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CHAPTER 1

How To Lose Fat

HOW TO LOSE FAT

So how do you kick off a book called *Superior Fat Loss*?

Well, if it were my book, I would begin with the major details. I'd clearly explain the fundamental basis of what it takes to make fat loss occur so you know *exactly* what you need to do to make it happen.

On second thought, scratch that.

If it were my book, I'd begin one step before that. Why? Because to truly understand how to make fat loss happen, you need to first understand what fat loss *actually is*.

You know what? Let's scratch that too.

If it were my book, I'd begin one additional step before that. Why? Because to really, truly, positively understand how to make fat loss happen, you need to first understand what *fat itself* actually is and why the human body gains it in the first place.

And hey, look at that. This IS my book!

Let's do this.

WHAT IS BODY FAT AND WHY DO WE GAIN IT?

Body fat is **adipose tissue**. That's the technical name for it.

The less technical name for it? "That stuff that makes my body look like crap."

Body fat is basically a form of stored energy. You see, your body is capable of storing excess energy (aka calories) in itself in two major forms: fat or muscle.

Of the two, fat is by far the more efficient storage option and the option your body prefers. This is why, more often than not, fat is going to be the form that excess energy gets stored in. It sucks, I know. But if you're reading this book, you most likely realized this a long, long time ago.

The question is though… why does this happen? Why do we store energy this way? Hell, why do we even store energy at all?

I mean, it not only looks terrible on us, but body fat is directly or indirectly responsible for an infinite number of physical and mental health problems.

So, what the hell? Why does your body do this to you? Why does your body hate you so much and allow something so bad to happen? Why does your body gain fat?

That's easy. **Because to your body, body fat is a *good* thing.**

In order for that statement to make sense, there's something you need to know about your body. A dark little secret it probably doesn't want you to know about it.

And that secret is this: your body is completely and utterly obsessed with you.

Well, maybe not so much obsessed with you as a person (although I'm sure you're a lovely person), but rather obsessed with your **survival**. Your body *really* wants you to stay alive. Like, *a lot*. To an almost creepy degree. We're talking stalker-level stuff here.

Just how obsessed is your body with keeping you alive, you ask?

So obsessed that your survival is literally the one and only thing your body thinks about, cares about or works toward. Seriously. If your body was capable of having a room of its own, there would surely be a shrine dedicated to your survival complete with weird candles and everything.

Let me explain…

THE SURVIVAL GOAL

Every single thing your body does every second of every day has just one purpose behind it… **keeping you alive and functioning as well as possible**.

Your body couldn't give the slightest of craps about your desire to lose fat and/or build muscle so you can look great naked, fit into nice clothes, feel good about yourself, become more athletic, win a competition or anything similar.

Your goals simply don't matter to your body.

Unless of course your only goal is to remain alive. In that case, your body is totally on your side. But beyond that, your body just doesn't care at all.

As it turns out, your body fat – that same ugly body fat you want to lose and wish you never gained in the first place – was actually gained partially *because* of your body's survival goal.

Think of it this way…

You know how you're supposed to keep extra food around in your basement or garage, just in case of an emergency? This way, if something bad ever happens and you're forced to go some period of time without having access to food, you'd be prepared for it by having this extra backup food available.

Well, your body does this exact same thing within itself. **Fat is just the storage container it uses to hold its backup food.**

> ***Fat is just the storage container it uses to hold its backup food.***

What I mean is, body fat is comprised of fat cells. Each one of these fat cells is essentially a tiny super-efficient storage container capable of storing calories, and your body is capable of creating new fat cells to store *even more* calories if additional storage space is needed. One full pound of body fat can store roughly **3500** calories.

Not too shabby.

And the whole reason that your body does all of this is to ensure that it always has a backup fuel source available to burn for energy, just in case a situation ever occurs where you don't have access to food.

Food, of course, is your body's primary source of energy/calories. As long as you have a sufficient amount of food, you're good. That's all you'll ever need.

But your body doesn't know if you're always going to have a sufficient amount of food.

This uncertainty, combined with the proven law of thermodynamics (more about that later) and the fact that your body is kinda like an overprotective mother who is constantly concerned with your safety, is why your body makes sure to store backup calories in the form of body fat whenever extra calories happen to be present for it to do so.

This way, if sufficient external calories (aka food) aren't available for whatever reason, backup internal calories (aka body fat) will be there. This makes your body very happy.

Now, I know what you're thinking.

"Um, body… relax. We have plenty of food available. There's no need whatsoever to store extra calories in the form of fat. In fact, feel free to never gain a single pound of fat ever again."

Yeah. I know this.

But your body doesn't.

Your body is completely unaware of just how unlikely it would be for you to end up in a situation where you didn't have access to a sufficient amount of food and were in legitimate danger of starving to death.

Because of this, your body lives in constant fear of it happening, as though it could happen at any second. And since survival is all your body cares about, it does everything possible to prepare for and prevent this scenario… even if its preferred method of doing so involves doing something you absolutely hate: creating new body fat and making you fatter.

Now, thousands of years ago, this was fantastic. This was truly an amazing life-saving feature to have, because going long periods of time without food was a regular occurrence back then. Thus, having a backup source of calories stored in your body was actually warranted and beneficial to the survival of the human race.

But now? Today? Not so much.

At least, not so much for those of us lucky enough to be born into a life where we are able to be sitting in front of a computer or holding a phone or tablet and reading this very book right now. For us… *not so much*.

We now have so much food – convenient, cheap, tasty, wonderful food – that we have MORE than we could ever need.

To the point where we can (and often do) easily consume more of it than we could ever need.

To the point where our bodies end up storing so much more backup energy than anyone thousands of years ago could have ever imagined possible.

To the point where we can (and often do) end up getting much fatter than we'd ever really need to be. And certainly much fatter than we'd ever really *want* to be.

But again, your body doesn't know or care about any of this.

It has no clue that you may have a kitchen filled with food. And quick access to stores filled with seemingly unlimited amounts of food that are being stocked and restocked on a daily basis with even more food. And an infinite number of restaurants to go to where you can have someone else cook food… that someone else brought there… that someone else caught/killed/grew… and then have someone else proceed to bring it out to your table and put it right in front of you.

Your body doesn't know or care about any of this.

Your survival is all that matters to it, and body fat is good for survival.

> ***Your survival is all that matters to it, and body fat is good for survival.***

Not only from the perspective of having a backup energy source available, but also from the perspective of having bonus **padding** and **insulation** on your body. These are all very survival-friendly traits to have, and your body fat has them. Which is why your body likes having it.

Yeah, I know what you're thinking now.

"But I really *don't* like having it."

I'm in full agreement there.

To us, fat is just unnecessary stuff that makes our bodies look bad. But to your body, the only way you could ever truly look "bad" is if you were dead. So, your body will gladly take backup fuel, soft padding and warm insulation over looking pretty any day of the week.

Not only that, but your body will also go out of its way to ensure that this fat remains on you for these very same reasons, including during periods of time when you are purposely trying to get rid of it. **Hell, *especially* during periods of times when you are purposely trying to get rid of it.**

And this brings us to our next obvious question…

How in the holy hell do we get rid of it?

Good question.

But in order to properly answer it, there's one other question we need to answer first.

WHAT IS FAT LOSS?

Oh, that's easy. It's your goal. It's the thing you want. It's the thing you bought this book to get. It's why you're going to make meaningful positive changes to your diet, training and lifestyle.

To you, fat loss is what needs to happen in order for you to look, feel and be as lean, awesome and healthy as you want to look, feel and be. Sound about right?

Now while that's most likely all true and completely understandable, that's not what fat loss *actually is*.

So then, what is it?

Well, according to the fitness industry, fat loss is this mysterious, complicated phenomenon with hidden secrets that need to be uncovered requiring all kinds of special programs and products and supplements surrounded by myths and deception with conflicting advice and inaccurate information everywhere you turn.

Now that's *definitely* not what fat loss is.

So, let's try this one more time. What… is… fat loss?

I think the best way to answer this question is by telling you something about **sweat**. Yeah… sweat. Don't worry, this will make sense in a second.

You know how you sweat when you're hot? Do you know why that happens? It's because your body noticed that your core temperature got too high, and its natural adaptive response is to try to lower it back to where it prefers it to be. How? By making you sweat, which creates an evaporative cooling effect on the surface of your skin.

So what does sweating have to do with losing fat? In this context… absolutely nothing.

However, the reason both occur is exactly the same.

Simply put, **fat loss is your body's adaptive response to its environment**.

> ***Simply put, fat loss is your body's adaptive response to its environment.***

What does that mean exactly? I'll tell you.

THE ADAPTIVE MECHANISM

Like I said a minute ago, your body's one and only goal is to keep you alive and functioning. To support this goal, your body is designed in such a way that makes it highly capable of adapting to the situations you put it in and the environments in which these situations occur.

Which means that if your body senses that something is happening to it that can potentially interfere with your survival or function, its natural adaptive response will always be to do whatever it is capable of doing to try to solve it, improve it or prevent it.

Sweating when you're hot is just one of many examples of this impressive adaptive mechanism at work.

Taking any unused calories that are present and storing them in the form of body fat for potential later use is another.

But guess what else?

This same adaptive mechanism that causes us to *store* fat is the very same adaptive mechanism that causes us to *burn* it.

After all, your body stored this fat for one very specific purpose, remember?

To serve as the backup fuel source you will burn for energy just in case a situation ever occurs where there is a need for doing so.

So… how do you get rid of this fat?

Simple.

By eliciting this need and thus creating a situation that requires your body to burn its stored fat.

In the most basic sense, *that's all fat loss is*.

It's the adaptive response your body initiates when it senses that there is a **need** for burning the fat it has stored in itself for that very purpose.

Just like how your body will sweat to try to cool itself when it senses you're getting too hot, your body will burn stored fat as a fuel source when it senses that there is a situation occurring in which burning that fat is something it **needs** to do for the benefit of your survival and function.

With me so far? Cool.

Because this brings us to what may very well be our most important question of all: **how exactly do we create this "need" and generate this adaptive response?**

I thought you'd never ask…

THE SOLE REQUIREMENT: THE CALORIC DEFICIT

Okay, quick recap.

Body fat is nothing more than extra calories your body has stored on itself for later use.

Why does it do this? To ensure you have a backup energy source to burn in case your primary energy source (the calories in the foods you eat) isn't present in sufficient amounts.

This means the actual act of fat loss is nothing more than the adaptive response that takes place when your body senses that there is a situation occurring that requires burning its backup fuel (aka your stored body fat).

And this means your job here is very simple: you need to create this situation.

That's it. That's all it's gonna take.

How do you do this? I think you already know the answer, but I'm going to tell you anyway.

This "situation" that I keep referring to has a name. It's called a **caloric deficit**.

Say it with me… *caloric deficit*.

The reason I'm asking you to repeat this term along with me as though I've suddenly become the host of some really weird children's TV show is because this term – or, more accurately, what this term entails – **is the sole cause and requirement of losing fat**.

Just what is a caloric deficit, you ask?

It's what happens when you consume fewer calories than your body needs to burn for energy… thus causing a *deficit* of calories to exist… thus requiring your body to find some alternative fuel source to burn instead. That alternative fuel source is your stored body fat.

Basically, when the full number of external calories (aka food) that your body needs isn't being supplied, it switches over to burning the internal calories (aka fat) that it previously stored in itself for this purpose.

Got all that? Good.

Because regardless of what you've already heard, what you may presently be hearing from other sources, or what you may eventually hear at any point in the future, a caloric deficit is the one and only cause of fat loss.

Whether you want to lose 10 lbs or 100 lbs, this is the sole fundamental requirement that must be met in order for it to happen.

Always. Every single time. No doubt about it.

This is THE singular **fact** that this entire program is built upon.

In fact, literally every effective fat loss program that has ever worked did so because a caloric deficit was directly or indirectly created. Every ineffective fat loss program that failed did so because it didn't.

Therefore, as long as this fundamental principle is put into action consistently… YOU. WILL. LOSE. FAT. Yes, 100% of the time. Guaranteed.

But if it's not… you will fail. Regardless of every other aspect of your diet, training, supplementation or whatever else… you will fail. No matter how perfectly you do everything else… you will fail. Is this getting through to you? I certainly hope so.

Because this is what it all comes down to. If you create a consistent caloric deficit, you will lose fat. But if you don't, you will not.

Therefore, as long as this fundamental principle is put into action consistently… YOU. WILL. LOSE. FAT. Yes, 100% of the time. Guaranteed.

Now let's break this whole thing down even further and figure out exactly how to do it.

CALORIES

No other dietary factor influences what your body does (lose fat, build muscle, gain weight, lose weight, maintain weight, etc.) anywhere near the level that calories do. Above all else, **calories are the key**.

In fact, your calorie intake is the only diet component that is truly required to change based on what your goal is. Meaning, the only significant dietary difference between goals like fat loss and muscle growth (or weight loss and weight gain) is total calories.

To fully understand why calories are so important and why a "deficit" of them is the one requirement of fat loss, you just need to understand the *scientifically proven* and *always valid* **law of thermodynamics**... aka **the energy balance equation**... aka **calories in vs calories out**.

Don't worry, it's super simple.

CALORIES IN

Everything you eat and drink contains calories. With the exception of obvious stuff like water, all foods and drinks contain some amount of calories, which of course go on to make up your calorie intake.

Since these are the calories being consumed and therefore taken in by your body, they are commonly referred to as your "**calories in**."

CALORIES OUT

On the other hand, everything you do burns calories. They are what your body uses for energy to do everything you need it to do.

From intense exercise like weight training and cardio, to basic daily tasks like standing, talking and brushing your teeth. In addition, your body actually burns a very significant number of calories each day on its own just keeping you alive and functioning properly. You know, doing stuff like breathing, pumping blood, digesting food, etc.

Since these are the calories that you are using and burning, they are commonly referred to as your "**calories out**."

CALORIES IN VS CALORIES OUT

What you just learned is the backstory that serves as the basis for the most important part of your diet.

Above all else diet related, the results you get depend most on your body's battle between **calories in** and **calories out**.

And what I mean by that is, which side most often wins this battle is what determines what your body does.

Confused? Let me make it as clear as possible.

The Cause, Effect and Result of Your Calorie Intake

The Cause	The Effect	The Result
Calories Out Beats Calories In	Caloric Deficit	Fat loss, muscle loss or both
Calories In = Calories Out	Maintenance	Weight stays the same
Calories In Beats Calories Out	Caloric Surplus	Fat gain, muscle gain or both

What you're seeing here is basically the first law of thermodynamics ("energy cannot be created or destroyed") in action in terms of how energy balance takes place within the human body. Calories are always either being stored somewhere or burned from somewhere. They never just vanish into thin air when they aren't used, or magically appear from nowhere when more are needed.

With this fact in mind, let's take a look at how each scenario works, starting at the bottom.

IF CALORIES IN BEATS CALORIES OUT, YOU'RE IN A *CALORIC SURPLUS*

In this first scenario, there is what's known as a **caloric surplus**.

In plain English, this means that you consumed more calories than you burned and there is a "surplus" of leftover calories that never got used.

In even plainer English, you're eating more calories than your body knows what to do with. It already burned all of the calories it needed to burn and used all of the calories it needed to use, but you are still continuing to give it even more calories.

Since your body has no immediate use for these extra calories that you are consuming, there is only one thing it can do: **store them in your body in some form**.

Once again, your body's primary function is to adapt to the conditions it is placed under. Since it uses calories for energy, it will use whatever calories you consume to perform whatever tasks it needs to perform on a daily basis.

However, if you then give it additional calories beyond that amount, it will store them in your body for later use.

And like I mentioned earlier, there are two ways for these extra calories to be stored:

1. **As Fat**

   Now, this first scenario is pretty obvious. This is, after all, how a fat person gets fat in the first place. They eat too much. Meaning, they consistently consume more calories than their body needs, so the excess is stored in the form of body fat. So, for anyone who has ever gained any amount of fat, this is ALWAYS how and why it happened. You consumed more calories than your body burned, and those extra leftover calories that were never used for anything were stored in your body as fat.

2. **As Muscle**

   This second scenario might surprise and confuse some people. But, it really shouldn't. You see, muscle can't be built out of nothing. The actual process of synthesizing new muscle tissue requires additional energy, and therefore additional calories. Meaning, in order to build any amount of muscle, your body needs additional calories beyond the amount that it usually needs to maintain its current state. In this case, those extra calories will be stored in your body in the form of muscle.

So, to sum this one up, a caloric surplus will *always* result in either **fat gain** (not good, but by far the most common scenario, as body fat is your body's preferred/most efficient method of storage), **muscle gain** (good, but way less common as it requires an intelligent weight training program that provides the proper muscle building signal), or some **combination of both**.

This is important to us for two reasons.

First, this is how fat is gained. Nothing else does it. A caloric surplus is literally the only cause.

Second, the opposite of this scenario is what's going to allow us to lose it…

IF CALORIES OUT BEATS CALORIES IN, YOU'RE IN A *CALORIC DEFICIT*

In this scenario, there is what's known as a **caloric deficit**.

In plain English, this means you consumed fewer calories than you burned and there is a "deficit" of calories.

In even plainer English, you are not supplying your body with the full number of calories it needs. It already used all of the calories you consumed, but it still needs more.

Since you are consuming fewer calories than your body needs, it will respond accordingly and **find some alternative form of stored energy in itself to burn instead**.

Like I've been saying all along, your body is all about adapting to its environment and doing whatever it is capable of doing to meet the conditions you put it under to keep you alive and functioning as efficiently as possible.

So, your body will first use whatever external calories you consume (aka food) as a form of energy to perform whatever tasks it needs to perform on a daily basis. However, if it still needs more calories beyond that amount, its natural adaptive response will be to use the calories that it previously stored in you for this very purpose.

What previously stored calories, you ask? There are two sources:

1. **Your Body Fat**
   Now, this first scenario is pretty obvious again. This is, after all, how you lose fat. You eat less. Meaning, you consistently consume fewer calories than your body needs, thus causing it to use your stored body fat for energy instead. So, for anyone who has ever lost any amount of fat, this is ALWAYS how and why it happened. You burned more calories than you consumed, and this forced your body to dip into your fat storage and burn your own body fat for energy.

2. **Your Muscle Tissue**
   This second scenario might surprise and confuse some people yet again. But it really shouldn't. Muscle is partially just calories that were stored in your body. You may like it much more than fat, but your body doesn't really care. So, when you are in a caloric deficit and your body needs to find some alternative energy source, it won't just automatically ignore your muscle tissue and only use fat. It is fully capable of using both.

So, to sum this one up, a caloric deficit will *always* result in either **fat loss** (good), **muscle loss** (not good, though it can be greatly minimized), or some **combination of both**.

Which means, if you want to lose any amount of fat, there MUST be a caloric deficit present.

You can go crazy obsessing over every other aspect of your diet or workout, but it will all be for nothing if there is no deficit. It is the sole requirement of losing fat.

And that brings us to our next obvious question: **how do we create this deficit?**

That's where our third scenario comes into play…

IF CALORIES IN = CALORIES OUT, YOU'RE AT *MAINTENANCE*

That's right. "Calories in" doesn't have to beat "calories out," and "calories out" doesn't have to beat "calories in."

They can actually be even with each other.

This scenario is most often referred to as **maintenance**. It's when your calorie intake is equal to your calorie output.

In plain English, it's when you consume the same number of calories that you burn or burn the same number of calories that you consume. It's all the same thing, really.

In even plainer English, it's when there is no surplus or deficit, which means that there is no excess energy that needs to be stored in your body (as fat or muscle), and there is no reason to switch over to burning your previously stored energy (fat or muscle) either.

Rather, everything will just be "maintained" as is. No weight loss, no weight gain. *Just maintenance.*

And the number of calories that makes this happen is known as your **calorie maintenance level**.

Your maintenance level is important because it's the starting point for figuring out exactly what your calorie intake needs to be in order for that required deficit to be present.

Meaning, creating a caloric deficit is just a simple matter of being below your maintenance level.

CREATING A CALORIC DEFICIT

So, how do you end up below your maintenance level? There are three possible ways:

1. **Diet: Eating Fewer Calories**
   Let's say you maintain your current weight eating 2500 calories per day (this is just a completely random example maintenance level). Eating 2000 calories per day would put you into a 500-calorie deficit (which is just a completely random example deficit) and cause fat loss to happen.

2. **Exercise: Burning More Calories**
   Using this same example, if you eat 2500 calories per day but then burn an additional 500 calories through some form of exercise (cardio, weight training, etc.), that same 500-calorie deficit would exist and you would lose fat.

3. **Diet + Exercise: A Combination Of Both**
   Again using this same example, if you eat 250 fewer calories and burn 250 more calories, this same 500 calorie deficit would exist yet again, thus causing fat loss to occur.

Regardless of how you choose to do it, your primary job as someone who wants to lose fat is to end up being some degree below your maintenance level.

As long as you are, a caloric deficit will exist and thus the one proven fundamental requirement of fat loss will be in place. Which means…

You… will… lose… fat.

Simple as that.

CHAPTER 2

The Annihilation Of Everything Else

THE ANNIHILATION OF EVERYTHING ELSE

Let me ask you a question.

It's a pretty important question, so be sure to think it through and give me your most genuine, honest answer.

Ready? Here it comes…

Do you agree with everything I said in the previous chapter? Specifically, do you accept the proven fundamental principle of "calories in vs calories out" and agree that a caloric deficit is the sole cause and requirement of losing fat?

Take a minute and really think about this one before answering.

I'll wait.

And please keep in mind that I'm not asking if you *partially*, *mostly* or even *almost entirely* agree with and accept this fact.

I'm asking if you **accept it 100%** as the scientifically proven fact that it is and agree with it **completely**… *without even the slightest bit of doubt in your mind*?

If your answer is **yes**, please let me be the first to congratulate you. And shake your hand. And hug you. And pat you on the back while that hug is taking place.

Trust me, you deserve it.

But if your answer is **no**, then there shall be no congratulating. There shall be no handshake. There shall be no hug or any accompanying pat on the back.

Hang in there, though.

I'm not going to make fun of you. I'm not going to laugh at you. I'm not going to get annoyed by you. I'm not going to argue with you. I'm not going to hate you or dismiss you or bang my head against a wall while trying to forget people like you actually exist in this world.

Yes, all of the above describes how I've spent a lot of time reacting to this scenario over the years and how I'll surely continue to react to it for years to come.

But, not now. Not here. Not in this book. At least, not quite yet.

Instead, I've decided to take on a much greater task.

I'm going to end this shit once and for all.

THE UNFORTUNATE REALITY OF HOW TO LOSE FAT

"It's easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled."

– some anonymous person, unknowingly describing this chapter.

You see, the problem with everything I explained in the previous chapter is that a very significant portion of the population isn't aware of it, doesn't agree with it, won't accept it, refuses to believe it, or, worst of all, has been taught, tricked or brainwashed into thinking something else that either contradicts it or supposedly disproves it.

Or all of the above. Maybe even something else altogether. Honestly, who the hell knows?

I certainly don't.

What I DO know is that everything I just explained – calories in vs calories out, a caloric surplus being the sole cause of fat gain, a caloric deficit being the sole cause of fat loss, etc. – **is a scientifically proven fact**.

And, for one reason or another, **many people do not accept it**.

Why not, you ask? Great question.

Why would a person fail to accept a proven fact? A very simple, very logical, very obvious *proven fact*. A fact with a damn near infinite amount of scientific and real-world evidence to support it, and absolutely nothing that comes even remotely close to legitimately disproving it.

Why on earth would anyone not accept this?

Well, thanks to having encountered this unfortunate reality numerous times over the past 15+ years, I now feel pretty confident in saying that there are just four main reasons:

1. The person sees that various non-calorie-based diets *DO* work to successfully cause fat loss (something they may have even experienced firsthand while using one of these diets)… thus making it *seem* as though a) it's not about calories after all, and b) other things cause fat loss.

2. The person attempted a calorie-based diet before (i.e., they created a caloric deficit) and their *perception* is that it didn't work for them… thus again making it *seem* as though a) it's not about calories after all, and b) other things cause fat loss.

3. The person unknowingly accepted bad information – *often in place of good information* – and they lacked/still lack the knowledge required to realize it or know the difference.

4. The person has formed an emotional attachment to their previously accepted bad information, and this prevents them from ever truly being capable of accepting the good information regardless of how well it is presented to them.

Yes, there is plenty of overlap between these four reasons, but they are distinct enough to cause their own individual problems, which leads to the same unfortunate conclusion: **the inability to fully accept "calories in vs calories out" as the sole determining factor of fat loss and fat gain**.

And if that isn't being fully accepted, we have ourselves a big problem. Why? Because this entire program is based on that fact. It is the foundation that everything in this book is built upon. Which means that we cannot go any further until these problems are solved and this fact is accepted.

Which brings us (or in this case, just me) to the next obvious question… *how do I do this*?

Well, I know the first step is to provide a clear explanation of the "good information." The previous chapter did that. Feel free to read it as many times as you need to for it to sink in sufficiently.

The next steps are going to be a bit trickier, because they're less about presenting good information, and much more about destroying bad information and misconceptions.

That's the bad news.

The good news, however, **is that destroying bad information and misconceptions *is exactly what the fuck I do***.

Let the games begin.

HOW OTHER DIETS WORK

The majority of fat loss diets in existence do not directly involve creating a caloric deficit.

They don't involve counting calories, they don't involve an explanation of "calories in vs calories out," and they sure as hell never say eating less calories is *the thing* you need to be doing in order for fat loss to occur.

In many cases, they'll even go so far as to state the opposite.

"It's not about calories at all," they'll say, "losing fat is all about _____!" where you can then fill in the blank with whatever that diet claims is the *real* key factor in fat loss and fat gain.

But calories? Nah.

Create a caloric deficit? Pssssh!

Eat less calories? HA!

On these types of diets, calories are always seemingly ignored in favor of some other… *thing*. Often a *thing* that is much more attractive than boring old calories.

What type of *thing* am I referring to, you ask?

Well, here's a list of the most popular non-calorie-based, fat-loss-diet "things" that come to mind…

COMMON NON-CALORIE-BASED DIETARY "THINGS"

1. **Carbs**
   As in, eating less carbs (or possibly eating none at all).

2. **Fat**
   As in, eating less fat (or possibly eating none at all).

3. **Sugar**
   As in, eating less sugar (or possibly eating none at all).

4. **Grains**
   As in, eating less grains (or possibly eating none at all).

5. **Wheat**
   As in, eating less wheat (or possibly eating none at all).

6. **Gluten**
   As in, eating less gluten (or possibly eating none at all).

7. **Dairy**
   As in, eating less dairy products (or possibly eating none at all).

8. **Raw**
   As in, eating less cooked foods (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only raw foods instead.

9. **Paleo**
   As in, eating less foods that were not available to our hunter-gatherer ancestors during the Paleolithic era (or possibly eating none of those foods at all), and eating only Paleo-approved foods instead.

10. **Vegan/Vegetarian**
    As in, eating less animal products (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only vegan/vegetarian-approved foods instead.

11. **Natural vs Processed**
    As in, eating less processed foods (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only natural foods instead.

12. **Low Glycemic vs High Glycemic**
    As in, eating less high glycemic foods (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only low glycemic foods instead.

13. **Complex Carbs vs Simple Carbs**
    As in, eating less simple carbs (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only complex carbs instead.

14. **Clean vs Dirty**
    As in, eating less “dirty” foods (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only “clean” foods instead.

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15. **Healthy vs Unhealthy**
    As in, eating less unhealthy foods (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only healthy foods instead.

16. **Good vs Bad**
    As in, eating less "bad" foods (or possibly eating none at all), and eating only "good" foods instead.

17. **Allowed Foods vs Forbidden Foods**
    As in, eating less of one or more specific foods or entire food groups (or possibly eating none of these foods/food groups at all), and only eating certain allowed foods/food groups instead.

18. **Food/Nutrient Combinations**
    As in, eating less of certain combinations of foods or nutrients together in a single meal (or possibly never eating these combinations at all), and only eating those foods or nutrients in isolation of each other.

19. **Meal Timing**
    As in, eating less (or possibly not at all) after a certain time at night, and only eating before that time.

20. **Intermittent Fasting**
    As in, eating less (or possibly not at all) during specific periods of the day or on certain days of the week, and only eating during allowed periods or on allowed days of the week.

As you can see, there are quite a few. Chances are you're familiar with many of them.

And while all of these dietary methods and the "things" they entail may seem fairly different from each other on the surface, **they all have three *very important* characteristics in common**…

1. THEY ALL WORK

Seriously. I'm not being sarcastic here. **They all legitimately work.**

Every single one of these types of diets and the "things" they entail doing have been successful in allowing countless people to lose fat.

Maybe even someone you know.

Maybe even you yourself.

That's because the honest truth here is that every "thing" you see on the list above *can* and *does* work as a method of losing fat.

This, of course, is something you may be surprised to hear me say. After all, I spent the first chapter of this book explaining why calories are the one and only fat loss *thing* there is, but yet none of the things you see on this list involve calories.

Which brings us to the second major characteristic they have in common…

2. THEY DON'T DIRECTLY INVOLVE CALORIES

Like, *at all*.

Literally, not a single one is based around eating less calories and creating a calorie deficit.

Instead, they all insist it is some other "thing" that dictates fat loss and fat gain, and the sole requirement is eating less of whatever that thing is.

You know, like eating less carbs, fat, sugar, grains, wheat, gluten, dairy, cooked foods, non-Paleo foods, non-vegan/vegetarian foods, processed foods, dirty foods, unhealthy foods, bad foods, high glycemic foods, simple carbs, various other specific foods or food groups, certain combinations of foods, and on and on and on.

Basically, they all involve eating less of something… just never calories.

Which brings us to the third and most important characteristic they all have in common…

3. THEY ALL *INDIRECTLY* MAKE YOU EAT LESS CALORIES

Do you know what's really funny about eating less of all of these non-calorie-based "things"?

The fact that each of these "things" contain calories.

And when you eat less of something that contains calories…

YOU END UP EATING LESS CALORIES!

Funny how that works out, isn't it?

Not only that, but all of these non-calorie-based "things" that you are told to eat less of *just-so-happen* to be "things" that most people are currently eating a lot of on a regular basis.

What an amazing coincidence!

Calories? Nah.

Create a caloric deficit? Pssssh!

Eat less calories? HA!

"It's not about calories at all," they'll say, "losing fat is all about _____!"

Now just close your eyes, cover your ears and ignore the various restrictions being placed on your diet that greatly limit or completely remove a ton of the calorie-containing foods you were previously eating, thus causing you to eat significantly less calories.

Weeeee!

That's right boys and girls, losing fat has NOTHING to do with calories at all! It just has a whole lot to do with convincing you to do things that indirectly cause you to eat less calories.

Isn't fat loss funny?

I certainly think so.

AND THAT'S HOW OTHER DIETS WORK

What it always comes down to is this.

Every fat loss diet in existence restricts *something*.

Be it the foods or food groups you're allowed to eat, the exact amounts of those foods or food groups you're allowed to eat, or the structure and/or timing in which you're allowed to eat them.

Whatever it is, they all restrict *something*.

And the thing about restricting what, when, how or how much a person can eat is that it always indirectly ends up restricting the total number of calories that they eat.

Meaning…

- Eating less carbs means *you're eating less calories*.
- Eating less fat means *you're eating less calories*.
- Eating less sugar, or grains, or gluten, or wheat means *you're eating less calories*.
- Eating less bad, dirty, processed, high glycemic, unhealthy foods means *you're eating less calories*.
- A Paleo diet, ketogenic diet, raw food diet, vegan/vegetarian diet or any remotely similar diet that eliminates many of the foods you were previously eating means *you're now eating less calories*.
- Not eating after 7:00 PM, or only eating during an 8-hour window of the day, or fasting completely 1-2 days per week, or doing any similar thing that reduces the total number of hours in a day you can eat during, or days in a week you can eat on… means *you're eating less calories*.

Can you spot the trend?

In every single case, less calories end up being eaten. And, like magic, it causes you to lose fat.

But what some people incorrectly think and what certain proponents of these diets often incorrectly claim is that it was the reduction in carbs, or fat, or grains, or sugar, or "bad" foods, or high glycemic foods, or not eating after 7:00 PM, or fasting intermittently (or whatever the hell else) that was directly responsible for making it happen.

It wasn't.

It was the reduction in calories that came indirectly as a result of these other things.

Sure, these "things" may be what led to a deficit being created, but the deficit itself is what actually caused fat to be lost.

And that, right there, is how various non-calorie-based diets work despite not making you eat less calories directly. They just get you to do things that make you eat less calories anyway.

Fun times.

Now, at this point, there's a question that may have just popped into your head…

"If all of these indirect methods of creating a caloric deficit *can* and *do* work like you said, why not just use one of them and lose fat that way?"

Great question.

Here's my even greater answer.

THE DIRECT DEFICIT VS THE INDIRECT DEFICIT

We can put every diet designed for fat loss into one of two groups:

1. Diets built around ***directly*** creating a caloric deficit (like *Superior Fat Loss*).

2. Diets built around doing other things that ***indirectly*** cause you to create a calorie deficit (all typically while claiming/pretending/assuming it's these other things that are making fat loss occur when in reality it's still always the deficit that these other things caused indirectly).

With all else being equal (adherence, consistency, etc.), every diet in the first group is guaranteed to work. Always. Every time.

The diets in the second group? With all else being equal, many of them CAN work. And many often DO work. No doubt about that at all.

The problem, however, is that it's now less of a guarantee and more of a *lucky side effect*.

What I mean is, the diets in Group 1 are all about figuring out how many calories you need to consume in order for your deficit to exist, and then simply putting everything else together with that calorie intake as the foundation of your diet.

The diets in Group 2 don't do this.

What they do instead is ignore calories while placing various unnecessary rules and restrictions on the way that you eat (e.g., foods/food groups you can or can't eat, special times you can or can't eat, special combinations of foods you can or can't eat, etc.), thus indirectly causing you to eat less… thus indirectly causing a deficit to exist.

Well… *hopefully* causing a deficit to exist, that is.

And therein lies the first big problem with all Group 2 diets.

You're doing stuff you don't truly NEED to be doing for the purpose of causing the one and only thing you NEED to be doing… *and these non-essential things are not always guaranteed to be enough to make it happen*.

Meaning, regardless of the type of non-calorie-based rules and restrictions a diet employs, it's always going to be possible for a person to out-eat them.

So while greatly restricting or completely eliminating *this*, *this* and *that* should *hypothetically* make it harder for someone to eat more calories than they should be, it certainly doesn't make it impossible (e.g., removing all of the "bad" foods isn't guaranteed to prevent a person from simply overeating "good" foods instead).

Which is a fact that many people on these types of diets unintentionally prove on a regular basis when they fail to reach their fat loss goals for this exact reason.

As if that wasn't bad enough, there's a second big problem with all Group 2 diets.

And that is the fact that the various **unnecessary** and often **excessive** rules and restrictions they entail typically force you to eat in a manner that doesn't suit your personal preferences (or just flat out annoys the crap out of you). **And doing things that go against your own personal preferences is the #1 way to create problems with diet adherence and long-term sustainability.**

This, probably even more so than the first problem, is why people on these types of diets either fail to lose fat in the first place, or fail to keep that fat off after losing it.

So, let me put it to you this way…

If you want your fat loss success to be predicated on luck and *accidentally* doing the one thing you truly need to be doing by way of doing a bunch of unnecessary nonsense that probably won't suit your personal dietary preferences… *cool*. Feel free to do so.

But if that's what you really want, you're going to need to find yourself some other book containing some other program. That shit just isn't going to fly in *Superior Fat Loss*.

I will not let your results come down to chance. Nor will I ever ask you to do any unproven, gimmicky, fad-ish, non-evidence-based, non-science-based, potentially unhealthy, largely-if-not-entirely-unnecessary "thing" that will only serve to make long-term fat loss harder for you than it truly needs to be.

Instead, *Superior Fat Loss* is going to base everything around ensuring that the sole requirement of your success is being directly met from the very beginning.

I won't allow it any other way, and neither should you.

But wait… what's that you say?

"I've tried this calorie thing before. I've counted calories. I've eaten less calories. I've burned more calories. I've created a caloric deficit. BUT… it didn't work for me."

Okay then, I see we still have some work to do.

No problem.

Follow me…

HOW A CALORIC DEFICIT DOESN'T WORK

I'm now going to present you with two statements.

The first statement is something you can imagine being said by me or virtually any other science-based person in the nutrition field. The second is something you can imagine being said by various random people who are struggling to lose fat.

1. "A caloric deficit is the sole cause and requirement of fat loss, and as long as a consistent deficit exists, body fat will be lost."

2. "I created a caloric deficit, but I didn't lose any fat."

Hmmm, that's interesting.

These statements are in direct opposition of each other, and that can only mean one of three things…

A) The first statement is false, **B**) the second statement is false, or **C**) the first statement is true *some* of the time, but apparently there are exceptions to it.

So, which one do you think it is? A, B or C?

Based on everything I've said so far in this book, the safe guess would be B… the second statement is false.

And it is. B is the correct answer to this question.

But that only leads to more questions. I mean, if a deficit always causes fat loss, how could a person say they created a deficit but didn't lose any fat? Are they lying? Are they stupid?

Ehh, honestly? *Sometimes… yes*.

But the vast majority of the time, they are just honest intelligent people who are simply **mistaken**.

Mistaken how, you ask? In my experience, there are six very common ways for a person to mistakenly come to the conclusion that they are in a caloric deficit but aren't losing fat.

Here now are those six ways…

SIX WAYS A CALORIC DEFICIT *SUPPOSEDLY* DOESN'T WORK

1. **Incorrectly tracking the amount of calories being eaten and/or burned.**

   This is, by far, the most common scenario. A person will claim to have accurately tracked how much they're eating and how much they're burning, and they'll adamantly *guarantee* that they are in a caloric deficit. Hell, I've even had one woman swear on the lives of her children that she meticulously tracked every single thing down to the very last gram and knew with absolute certainty that she was in a caloric deficit. Therefore, the obvious problem in cases like these is that the caloric deficit simply isn't working and "calories in vs calories out" is not the true determining factor of fat loss after all. Right?

   Wrong. In reality, the person is either eating more calories than they think they are, burning less calories than they think they are, or some combination of both… **and no deficit exists**.

   But how could that be possible if the person swears they're tracking everything so closely? Oh, that's easy. Because if there's one thing damn near every nutritionist and diet professional will agree on, it's that people trying to lose fat almost always underestimate and/or under-report how many calories they are actually eating, and overestimate and/or over-report how many calories they are actually burning.

   This kind of thing happens **ALL THE TIME** and various weight loss studies confirm it. Yes, it even happens to people who are tracking things *so closely* that they're willing to bet the lives of their children on it… just like this woman, who eventually came to realize that her tracking wasn't as accurate as she thought. And yes, last I heard, her kids were still alive and well.

   So, the problem here isn't that a caloric deficit doesn't work. It's that the person mistakenly thinks they're in a deficit when they really aren't.

2. **Incorrectly tracking fat loss progress.**

   In this scenario, it's not a lack of deficit that is the problem, but rather the person's inability to see that it's working. See, in most cases, the main way a person perceives fat loss progress is by weighing themselves. This is fine. However, if you're inaccurately weighing yourself and/or tracking your weight, you're going to end up inaccurately perceiving that progress.

   So maybe the person weighs themselves with a different amount of clothing on each time they step on the scale. Or maybe they sometimes weigh themselves in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon, sometimes at night, sometimes before they eat or drink, sometimes after they

eat or drink, sometimes at the gym before and/or after their workout, and so on. Or maybe they base their progress (or lack thereof) on comparing what their weight does from one day to the next. Or even one week to the next. All of this can give a person a very false interpretation of what their body weight is *legitimately* doing **and thus whether fat loss is legitimately happening or not happening**.

Which means the problem here isn't that a deficit doesn't work, it's that the person is mistakenly tracking their progress in a manner that doesn't allow them to see that it's working.

3. **Letting normal short-term fluctuations in body weight hide true progress.**
In this similar scenario, the person may again be in a deficit and losing fat, but they aren't seeing it happen on the scale because a scale only shows gains and losses of *weight* rather than gains and losses of strictly *fat*.

The problem with this is that "weight" can be a lot of different things. For example, fat, muscle, water, glycogen and poop. **And that means it's very possible to gain *weight* in the form of something else (especially water) while simultaneously losing weight in the form of *fat*.** Which means it's very possible to successfully lose *fat* while gaining some other thing that counterbalances that *weight* and causes the number on the scale to stay the same.

So, the problem here isn't that a deficit doesn't work, it's that proof of it working isn't showing up on the scale yet due to normal and temporary gains in something else.

4. **Unrealistic expectations about what should be happening.**
In this scenario, the person is once again in a deficit, only now they're *also* accurately tracking their progress *and* not letting normal body weight fluctuations mask their results. Awesome. However, the person is so underwhelmed by the realistic results they're seeing that they sometimes *feel* like it's just not working at all.

Now why exactly would a person be underwhelmed by realistic fat loss progress? Because, for some reason (most often the fat loss industry shoving false claims and bullshit promises down their throat), **they formed highly unrealistic expectations about how quickly fat loss should be happening for them**. So, if the person is expecting to lose 5-10 lbs per week (or more) and they "only" lose 1 lb, they might be disappointed enough to simply say "I barely lost anything, it's not working."

So in this case, the problem here isn't that a deficit doesn't work, it's that the person has an unrealistic idea of what "working" actually means.

5. **An issue with adherence and consistency.**

In this scenario, it's just a simple matter of a person not being consistent enough with their deficit. So maybe they'll legitimately be in a deficit on certain days of the week, but then overeat enough on other days to create a surplus… thus canceling out any deficit they may have created and ending up breaking even at maintenance for the week. This person might then say "I created a deficit but didn't lose any fat" and they'd be half right. **They *did* create a deficit… just not consistently enough or long enough for it to actually work.**

It's funny. People who think "calories in vs calories out" isn't a thing (let alone *THE* thing) will sometimes cite research showing that most diets fail. And it's true. The success rate among all fat loss diets is quite low, and some of those failed diets did indeed involve creating a caloric deficit. "So," some stupid person will say, "a deficit clearly doesn't work because most people trying to lose fat that way fail!"

The only problem with this genius logic is that the main reason so many people fail is because THEY fail. Not the diet or the deficit, but rather the person's ability to actually put that diet and that deficit into action, be consistent with it, and sustain it long-term. If people did that, there would be a 100% success rate. But they don't. They lose motivation. Or get lazy. Or lack consistency. Or fail to form the necessary habits. Or don't have enough self-control. Or have issues with being knowingly or unknowingly noncompliant (more about this later). Or fall off their diet. Or miss workouts. Or make mistakes. Or something similar that prevents the one thing they truly need – a caloric deficit – from *consistently* being present.

So, the fact that most diets fail has nothing to do with any supposed ineffectiveness of a deficit, but rather the ineffectiveness of the person to do what needs to be done for it to work.

6. **An underlying health issue.**

Now we have the rarest scenario of them all. While it certainly does occur, it is BY FAR the least likely culprit (yet ironically, often the first thing some people assume is the reason). And that is the problem of having some sort of underlying health issue (e.g., something thyroid related) or medication **that negatively affects a person's ability to lose weight**.

This can happen in two ways. The first is that certain health issues and medications can cause significant amounts of edema (aka water retention). So, similar to #3 from before, the person

may be successfully losing fat, but a gain in water weight (in this case, caused by something outside of the category of a "normal fluctuation") is preventing it from showing up on the scale.

The second way is by affecting a person's metabolic rate, thus causing their body to burn less calories than it should be burning. But even in cases like this, the problem is STILL that there is no deficit present. The important difference, however, is that the reason for this nonexistent deficit isn't a mistake in the tracking of calorie intake/output or a lack of consistency. It's that their maintenance level is much lower than it should be due to whatever underlying health issue may be present.

If you suspect either of these scenarios to be your problem, by all means go see a doctor and have them run tests to confirm it (and, if real, help you manage it). Otherwise, it's something else on this list. **And, the vast majority of the time that a person thinks they are in a deficit but aren't losing fat, *it is indeed something else on this list*.**

So, there.

Now you know how non-calorie-based diets work (they get you to indirectly eat less calories), and how it's possible for someone to *think* they're in a caloric deficit yet not be losing any fat (one or more of these 6 scenarios are taking place).

Which means… "calories in vs calories out" is indeed THE thing, and a caloric deficit is indeed the sole cause and requirement of fat loss.

We did it. We're done. Hooray!

Wait…

What?

Are you serious???

You're still having some doubts about this? You still don't fully accept it?

Good lord.

Fine.

Follow me… one last time.

THE FINAL NAIL

Throughout this chapter, I've used logic to help clear up the most prominent misconceptions that prevent people from accepting the proven fact that a caloric deficit is the sole cause and requirement of losing fat.

And now? Now I'm ready to put the final nail in that coffin.

To do this, I'm going to provide you with just a small sampling of the seemingly infinite amount of scientific and real-world evidence I've been alluding to thus far.

Let's begin with one of my favorites of them all.

THE TWINKIE DIET

In 2010, Mark Haub, a professor of human nutrition at Kansas State University, wanted to prove the very same thing I've been saying: that fat loss and fat gain is always dictated by "calories in vs calories out," and a caloric deficit will always cause a person to lose fat regardless of everything else… including the various "things" that other diets claim are the *real* key.

To do this, Mark took things to a very extreme point that I would never actually recommend, but absolutely love for the purpose of proving that calories really are THE thing.

Specifically, **Mark went on a 10-week diet comprised primarily of snack foods**.

We're talking Twinkies, Little Debbie cakes, Doritos, Oreos, brownies, sugary cereals like Corn Pops and other equally crappy foods that are all highly processed, lacking in nutritional value, loaded with sugar, super high in carbs (especially the simple, high glycemic "bad" kind of carbs), high in "bad" fat, and possess other similar traits that are common among typical unhealthy "junk food."

But, *he also created a caloric deficit*.

He went from eating 2600 calories per day (his estimated maintenance level) to eating about 1800 calories per day. He just happened to get the majority of those 1800 daily calories from some of the junkiest foods you can think of.

The purpose? To prove that despite his daily diet being filled mostly with garbage, he'd still lose fat just fine because a caloric deficit was present.

The result? He lost 27 lbs in 2 months and reduced his body fat percentage from 33.4% to 24.9%.

The conclusion? A caloric deficit is the sole cause and requirement of fat loss. Even if those calories come from the shittiest sources known to man, fat will STILL be lost. It's not carbs, or fat, or sugar, or whether the foods are "good" or "bad," or "healthy or "unhealthy," or Paleo or non-Paleo or anything similar. It's the total amount of calories being eaten, and whether that amount consistently puts you above or below your maintenance level.

(Source: The Twinkie Diet)

THE FAST FOOD DIET

In 2014, John Cisna, a high school science teacher from Iowa, did his own similar experiment involving another extreme diet that I would again never actually recommend but still love for the purpose of proving that calories really are THE thing.

Specifically, **John went on a McDonald's-only diet for 3 straight months**.

His daily diet was comprised primarily of foods like Big Macs, Quarter Pounders, McMuffins, various desserts (such as sundaes and ice cream) and other typical fast food items.

But – *get this* – he also followed strict nutritional limits laid out by his students which included consuming about 2000 calories per day… *a calorie intake that, for John, constituted being in a caloric deficit*.

Guess what happened? **He lost 37 lbs during those 90 days**.

Why? Because it's not the specific foods or food groups you eat or don't eat (nor the manner in which they are eaten) that causes fat to be lost or gained. It's *never* any of these other "things." It's always total calories.

(Source: The Fast Food Diet)

THE POTATO DIET

In 2010, Chris Voigt, the head of the Washington State Potato Commission (yup, apparently that's a thing), didn't really appear to give a crap about proving "calories in vs calories out" to be true. He didn't initially care about losing any body fat at all, either.

He mostly just wanted to draw attention to himself for the purpose of dispelling a bunch of common myths surrounding potatoes (e.g., that they are unhealthy, too high glycemic, contain too many carbs, etc.).

Why? To show that potatoes are a "nutritious, cost-effective, easy-to-grow vegetable that should be part of a well-balanced diet" and "to draw attention to federal proposals that bar or limit potatoes in some programs." His main objective was to convince the USDA to include potatoes in school lunch programs.

To get the publicity he was looking for, Chris went on yet another extreme diet that I would never actually recommend, but still love for the purpose of proving that calories really are THE thing.

Chris ate nothing but potatoes for 60 days.

He didn't use any sour cream, butter or other toppings. He strictly ate only potatoes (prepared in a variety of ways) along with some seasoning and oil for cooking.

He originally estimated his maintenance level to be 2200 calories, and his intention was to eat exactly that amount each day so he'd maintain his current weight. However, not realizing how full he would feel on a diet comprised entirely of potatoes, he ended up eating only 1600 calories per day for the first 3 weeks (meaning… *a caloric deficit was unintentionally created*).

At that point, he made a concerted effort to get closer to his 2200 maintenance level for the remainder of his diet. However, he later stated that he believes his maintenance level was actually more like 2800 calories rather than the 2200 he first assumed (meaning, even when consuming 2200 calories per day, *he was still unintentionally in a deficit throughout those remaining weeks*).

So, what happened? **He lost 21 lbs during those 60 days.**

Why? Because a caloric deficit is the sole cause of fat loss, even when all of the calories being consumed are unconventionally provided in the form of ("high glycemic" and "high carb") potatoes and nothing else.

(Source: The Potato Diet)

A SMALL SELECTION OF RELEVANT STUDIES

Real-world evidence like this is great, but do you know what's also great? Studies that support their findings.

Here now is just a tiny selection from a wide range of studies fitting that description…

- Metabolic and behavioral effects of a high-sucrose diet during weight loss.
  This study took two groups of women and put them on similar hypocaloric diets (meaning, below maintenance level so that a caloric deficit was present). The only difference between the diets of the two groups was that **43%** of one group's daily calorie intake came from sucrose (aka table sugar), while just **4%** of the other group's daily calorie intake came from sucrose. Guess what happened? Despite one group eating a VERY high sugar diet and the other group eating a VERY low sugar diet, **they both lost equal amounts of weight and body fat**. Why? Because it's NOT the source of your calories that causes fat loss, it's the presence of a caloric deficit.

- Increased meal frequency does not promote greater weight loss […]
  This study took 16 overweight men and women and split them into 2 groups. They then had each person in each group create the same sized caloric deficit and then consume that same calorie intake every day for 8 weeks. HOWEVER, they had one group eat **3 meals** a day, and the other group eat **6 meals** a day. Guess what happened? **They all lost the same amount of weight.** In fact, the study showed that there was no difference at all in fat loss, appetite control, or anything similar. Why? Because meal frequency in and of itself doesn't affect your ability to lose fat or gain fat. Calories do.

- Comparison of isocaloric very low carbohydrate/high saturated fat and high carbohydrate […]
  This study took 83 subjects, estimated the daily calorie requirements of each person (aka their maintenance levels), and then created a caloric deficit of 30%. They then divided them up into 3 groups. The first had only **4%** of their total daily calorie intake coming from carbs. The second had **50%** of their total calorie intake coming from carbs. The third had **70%** of their total calorie intake coming from carbs. Guess what happened? Even though some people were eating a VERY LOW carb diet and others were eating a VERY HIGH carb diet… **they all lost the same amount of weight and body fat**. Why? Because low carb or high carb isn't what makes us gain or lose fat. Calories are, regardless of how many of them come from carbs.

- Similar weight loss with low-energy food combining or balanced diets.
  This study divided 54 obese patients into 2 groups, both of which were put on low calorie

diets (meaning a caloric deficit was present) and fed similar percentages of protein, fat and carbs. HOWEVER, one group was given a more **balanced** diet comprised of meals that contained protein, fat and carbs, while the second group had their carb and fat calories **separated** so they were not eaten together in the same meal. Guess what happened? **They all lost the same amount of weight and body fat.** Why? Because the manner in which you combine foods, organize your meals and consume your daily calories isn't what causes fat loss. A caloric deficit is.

- Fat loss depends on energy deficit only, independently of the method for weight loss.
  This study divided its subjects up into 2 groups, and had them both create the same sized caloric deficit. However, the difference between them was the manner in which this deficit was created. One group did it by eating less total calories (diet alone), but the other group did it by eating less total calories AND burning more calories by doing cardio (a combination of diet AND exercise). But again, the total weekly caloric deficit was the same for both groups. Guess what happened? **They all lost the same amount of weight and body fat.** Why? Because a deficit of X calories is a deficit of X calories regardless of whether you burned those calories via cardio or just didn't eat them in the first place. Fat loss isn't about how you create the deficit, it's about the deficit itself.

I can keep going, but something tells me you'd get bored with any more of these.

However, just in case you'd like to see more, let me point you to an article by Armi Legge that covers many of the very same things I've already covered, but also happens to include references to nearly 150 studies that are in some way relevant to supporting the fact the calories are THE thing. It's here. Feel free to take a look at each study next time you have a few hours to kill.

THE LIGHTNING ROUND OF EVIDENCE AND DESTRUCTION

I'd elaborate on what that title means, but I have a feeling it's going to be sufficiently self-explanatory in a second. So, without any further ado, get on your mark… get set… GO!

"BUT IT'S CARBS! I KNOW IT'S CARBS! GARY TAUBES' BOOKS SAY IT'S ALL ABOUT CARBS, NOT CALORIES!"

No. Details here, here and here.

"BUT IT HAS TO BE CARBS!! BECAUSE… UM… INSULIN!"

No. Details here.

"BUT [INSERT YOUR FAVORITE DELUSIONAL LOW CARB NUTJOB HERE] SAYS IT'S CARBS! AND THEY CITE STUDIES THAT SUPPORT THIS! MANY SCIENTIFIC STUDIES! I'VE SEEN THE REFERENCES!"

No. I don't doubt that various low carb proponents (or proponents of any other unnecessary fad diet) sometimes cite studies when making their claims. And I don't doubt that you've seen these references. But, I'm going to doubt that you've seen anything more than that. Meaning, like most of the people who fall for this nonsense, you don't actually read the studies being cited. And I don't mean just the abstracts, either. I mean reading (and *understanding*) the entire study.

Because, if you did, you'd see what the scientific community has been seeing for decades from the cult of low carb. Which is, people who are misunderstanding and/or misrepresenting research to support their own biased false claims, while cherry picking a small number of highly flawed (i.e., calorie and protein intake are not controlled for) and/or laughably inconclusive studies that supposedly prove these claims to be true while *completely ignoring* the much, much, MUCH larger number of studies that very clearly and conclusively disprove them. The scientific community has been picking this shit apart for years.

"BUT I HEARD THE PALEO DIET IS THE KEY TO EVERYTHING, INCLUDING FAT LOSS!"

No. Details here and here.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT SUGAR?!? IT'S AS ADDICTIVE AS COCAINE!!!"

No. Details here.

"BUT FRUCTOSE! WHAT ABOUT FRUCTOSE!?!"

No. Details here.

"BUT I HEARD THERE ARE SUPERFOODS THAT BURN FAT!"

No. Details here.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT THE GLYCEMIC INDEX! AND COMPLEX CARBS VS SIMPLE CARBS! AND GOOD CARBS (LIKE BROWN RICE) VS BAD CARBS (LIKE WHITE RICE)!"

No. Details here.

"BUT BUILDING MUSCLE MAKES YOU BURN TONS OF FAT!"

No. Details here.

"BUT THE BEST WAY TO LOSE FAT IS BY DOING EXERCISES THAT TARGET THE SPECIFIC BODY PART YOU WANT TO LOSE FAT FROM!"

No. Details here.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT TONING EXERCISES!"

No. Details here.

"BUT I HEARD NEGATIVE CALORIE FOODS BURN FAT!"

No. Details here.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT TURNING FAT INTO MUSCLE!"

No. Details here.

"BUT CLEAN EATING IS THE KEY!"

No. Details here.

"BUT AS LONG AS YOU EAT CLEAN, YOU CAN'T GAIN FAT!"

No. Clean or dirty, healthy or unhealthy, good or bad… too many calories from ANY food source will cause you to gain fat and/or prevent you from losing fat just the same. It doesn't matter if it's the cleanest and healthiest food in the history of food. Eat enough of it to not be in a deficit, and you won't lose fat. Eat enough of it to put you into a surplus, and you'll gain fat. It's "calories in vs calories out" that matters here, not "clean vs unclean."

"BUT IF YOU EAT TOO FEW CALORIES, YOUR METABOLIC RATE SHUTS DOWN AND YOUR BODY GOES INTO 'STARVATION MODE' WHERE IT THEN HOLDS ONTO ALL OF YOUR STORED BODY FAT (SOMETIMES EVEN GAINING ADDITIONAL FAT WHILE IN A DEFICIT), AND THE ONLY WAY TO LOSE FAT IS BY EATING *MORE* CALORIES!"

No. Details here and here.

"BUT WHAT ABOUT DETOXES, CLEANSES AND JUICE FASTS! I ALWAYS LOSE A TON OF FAT REALLY FAST WITH THESE METHODS!!"

No. What you lose really fast is water weight, not body fat. Stupid useless garbage like this (details here) is marketed as miracles to people who don't understand the difference between *fat* loss and *weight* loss… in the hope that they'll be so easily fooled by the fast initial decrease in body weight that takes place that they won't actually notice there was no body fat lost… or that any weight (aka water) they do lose is instantly regained right after. Don't be one of these people.

"BUT THIS IS ALL JUST YOUR PERSONAL PREFERENCE AND YOU'RE TRYING TO PASS IT OFF ONTO EVERYONE ELSE!!"

No. There's a reason it's called the *law* of thermodynamics and not the *opinion* of thermodynamics.

"BUT [INSERT SOMEONE/SOMETHING WIDELY REGARDED AS A TERRIBLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION] SAYS…"

No.

"SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT CALORIES ARE THE ONE AND ONLY THING ANYONE SHOULD EVER CARE ABOUT OR PAY ANY ATTENTION TO, AND NO OTHER ASPECT OF A PERSON'S DIET EVER MATTERS AT ALL?!?"

No, I'm not saying that. What I am saying is that calories are, by far, *the thing that matters most*. And that "calories in vs calories out" is always going to be the sole factor that dictates whether we lose fat or gain fat… regardless of what is or is not also happening with any other dietary component.

Now, do other dietary components play *any* role in fat loss/fat gain or your overall health in general? Yes, of course. However, they all instantly become irrelevant to your goal of losing fat in the absence of that required caloric deficit.

Yes, even if 100% of your calorie intake comes from the best foods, consumed in the best amounts, in the best combinations, in the best ways, at the best times. If there's no deficit, you're still not going to lose any fat. "Calories in vs calories out" > all of it combined.

"SO YOU'RE SAYING IT'S ALL ABOUT FOOD *QUANTITY* AND FOOD *QUALITY* DOESN'T MATTER AT ALL?!?"

No, I'm not saying that. What I am saying is that food quantity is what matters most and, in terms of fat loss or fat gain, is always going to be the one direct factor that determines what happens… regardless of the quality of the foods providing those calories.

However, despite not being what directly causes fat to be lost or gained, food quality still matters for other reasons. Many of these reasons are related to your overall health and function (e.g., it's going to be mighty tough to get a sufficient amount of vitamins and minerals on a diet comprised mostly of low-quality garbage), while other reasons are still indirectly related to your fat loss progress (e.g., higher-quality foods tend to be a lot more filling than lower-quality foods, thus helping a person to control their hunger better and thus sustain the caloric deficit they need to be in).

So yes, food *quality* definitely matters. It's just always going to be a secondary factor in comparison to food *quantity*. So much so that if the quantity part isn't what it needs to be for a deficit to exist, the quality part isn't going to make any difference whatsoever when it comes to losing fat (or preventing fat from being gained in a surplus, for that matter).

And, as *The Twinkie Diet* showed us, you can get the quantity part right while completely screwing up the quality part, and fat loss will STILL take place. (No, this is not a recommendation to actually do that. Just supporting the point.)

"BUT MY DIET IS DIFFERENT THAN ALL OF THE OTHER DIETS YOU MENTIONED BECAUSE IT DOESN'T MAKE ME EAT LESS OF ANYTHING! IN FACT, THE ONLY THING IT MAKES ME DO IS EAT MORE OF CERTAIN THINGS, SPECIFICALLY MORE GOOD, CLEAN, HEALTHY FOODS (LIKE VEGETABLES) AS WELL AS MORE HIGH FIBER FOODS AND HIGH PROTEIN FOODS. I'M ALLOWED TO EAT *UNLIMITED* AMOUNTS OF THESE KINDS OF FOODS AND THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON ANYTHING. I CAN EAT AS MANY CALORIES AS I WANT AND I STILL LOSE FAT!"

No. Here's two funny things about that.

First, eating more of these "good" things has to mean you're eating less of something else you were previously eating. You're not simply eating *exactly* what you were always eating every day and now eating a ton of high fiber and high protein foods *in addition* to it. Something was subtracted somewhere and this new stuff took its place.

And guess what? These new foods you're eating more of – high fiber foods like vegetables and foods high in protein – tend to be quite low in calories. And odds are pretty high that the foods they're replacing were foods that were a lot higher in calories.

But hey, I'm willing to completely ignore this and pretend that's not what's happening (even though it is). Instead, let's focus on the second thing.

And that is the fact that vegetables, fiber and protein are the most filling things you can possibly eat. They are guaranteed to make you feel fuller faster (say that five times fast) and stay fuller longer.

And do you know what happens when you're fuller? *You're less hungry*.

And do you know what happens when you're less hungry? *You eat less food*.

And do you know what happens when you eat less food? *You eat less calories*.

So your diet might appear to allow you to eat "unlimited" amounts of calories, but it's simultaneously doing other things that will naturally limit how many calories you end up eating.

It's just another example of an indirect deficit being created, only in this case you're not directly eating less of some other thing like most diets require (e.g., less carbs, less sugar, etc.), but instead eating more of the things that will directly make you fuller which then indirectly causes you to eat less calories.

Same shit, different method.

"BUT THE 'CALORIES IN VS CALORIES OUT' MODEL IS FLAWED. AND IT DOESN'T APPLY TO HUMANS. AND IT'S MUCH MORE COMPLEX THAN YOU'RE MAKING IT OUT TO BE. AND A CALORIE ISN'T A CALORIE. AND DIFFERENT FOODS AFFECT OUR BODIES IN DIFFERENT HORMONAL AND METABOLIC WAYS. AND 1000 CALORIES FROM PROTEIN ISN'T THE SAME AS 1000 CALORIES FROM FAT OR CARBS. AND, AND, AND..."

No. Not a single bit of this does anything to invalidate the "calories in vs calories out" model. Not even a little. Rather, it's all just a small part of what makes that model what it is. Details here and here.

"BUT... I STILL DON'T ACCEPT IT"

Well, I guess there's only one thing left for me to do.

Ready?

This is me making fun of you.

And laughing at you. And getting annoyed by you. And hating you. And dismissing you.

All while I bang my head against a wall to forget people like you actually exist in this world.

Sorry, but you brought this on yourself.

"Calories in vs calories out" is *the thing*, and a caloric deficit is the sole cause and requirement of fat loss. This is not an opinion, or a concept, or a method, or even just my personal favorite way.

It's the only way.

If you still want to argue against it, feel free. Just understand that when you argue against a fact, you're guaranteed to be wrong. **That's just how facts work.**

On the other hand, if we're now both on the same page and in full agreement with this fact, there's just one more thing left for me to do.

Ready?

This is me congratulating you.

And shaking your hand. And hugging you. And patting you on the back.

Trust me, you deserve it.

You are now officially ready to lose fat.

CHAPTER 3

The End

THE END

Alright, let's recap.

How do you lose fat?

It's pretty simple, and it only requires you to do one thing: **create a caloric deficit**.

You can create this deficit three different ways. First, you can eat fewer calories. Second, you can burn extra calories. Third, you can do some combination of both so that you're eating a little less and burning a little more.

Regardless of how you choose to do it, as long as you consistently end up being some degree below your maintenance level, a deficit will exist and body fat will be lost.

Here, let me emphasize the importance of this fact by putting it inside of a pretty box…

> **A caloric deficit = the sole cause and requirement of fat loss.**

Got it? Good.

Because here's the thing.

There are tons of different ways to put everything together. There are tons of different methods and approaches to use, and tons of remaining details that can be designed tons of different ways. But the truth here is that as long as this single fundamental requirement is in place… **ALL of it will work**.

Every single diet and/or workout that involves the creation of a deficit **will work**.

You could screw up and/or completely ignore every other aspect of your diet and workout, and you will still successfully lose fat as long as this requirement is in place.

Hell, just like those extreme real-world examples from earlier proved, you could put together the shittiest diet (and workout program) known to man, and you'll still lose fat as long as this requirement is taken care of.

On the other hand…

You could do everything else perfectly. You could have the greatest diet in the world, the most effective workout routine in the world, and take every remotely beneficial supplement that has ever existed. You could read about this stuff, learn about this stuff, talk about this stuff and obsess over and adjust all of these major and minor components 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You could work extremely hard, be relentlessly motivated and put it all into action consistently for years and years and years.

But guess what? If that deficit isn't consistently there, **it's never going to work**. Not even a little.

Everything else becomes a big waste of time if that sole requirement is not being met.

Above all else, THIS is what matters. THIS is what causes fat loss. THIS is the sole difference between success and failure here.

As long as you create a caloric deficit… *you will lose fat*.

If that requirement is not being met… *you won't*.

End of story.

> ***As long as you create a caloric deficit… you will lose fat.***

THANKS FOR READING!

Well, that about wraps things up.

I hope you enjoyed this book. I also hope you fully understand what you need to do in order to lose fat, and I hope you actually do it.

I wish you great success in all of your fat loss endeavors.

Good luck, and thank you for reading!

Wait…

Hold on…

You're still here?

And what's that you're saying?

It's not quite that simple?

People create a caloric deficit all the time and still don't get the results they want?

You've even created a caloric deficit yourself and didn't get the results you wanted?

There's gotta be more to losing fat than this?

This can't be the end?!?!

Oh…

You know what?

You're right.

CHAPTER 4

The Five Problems

THE FIVE PROBLEMS

Ah yes, if only it really was that simple.

Well, technically speaking of course, *it is*.

I mean, if you've spent any time on the usual websites, forums or social media, reading the usual articles, watching the usual videos, having the usual discussions, and maybe even (god help you) buying all of the usual health/fitness magazines, then I can all but guarantee that you have at some point ended up in a state of "holy shit, losing fat is the most confusing and complicated thing in the history of the world!!"

That's a state I can certainly remember being in myself.

So, the fact that fat loss can *legitimately* be simplified down to just four words ("create a caloric deficit") should feel pretty good and hopefully provide you with some degree of clarity.

Simply put, if you do what I just laid out over the first part of this book – eat a little less, burn a little more, or do some combination of the two so that you are below your maintenance level and a deficit exists – you will lose fat. No doubt about it.

This is literally the only requirement that exists. Meet it, and fat is lost.

Which means, the chapters you just read contain everything you need to know to successfully make fat loss happen.

Unfortunately, that's not good enough.

It turns out there's a lot more to losing fat than just being able to make it happen.

It turns out that even when you *know* what needs to be done… and even when you *try* to do those things… and even when you actually *do* those things… your results can still range anywhere from "far below what they could be" to "completely nonexistent."

Why is this?

Why does the majority of the population – *including those of us who completely agree with and fully understand everything we just covered* – fail to get the fat loss results they want?

Well, it's much more than just a singular problem. There's a never-ending amount of potential problems at play here.

However, I have found that there are just **five major categories of problems** that we've all dealt with in the past, are currently dealing with right now, or will eventually end up having to deal with in the future… all of which significantly impact our ability to fully reach our fat loss goals.

They are:

1. Getting no results.
2. Getting inferior results.
3. Losing too much muscle.
4. It's hard, it sucks and your body fights back.
5. The results don't last.

Let's take a look at each…

PROBLEM #1: NO RESULTS

This first one is pretty easy to explain. It's just a complete lack of any meaningful fat loss progress whatsoever.

This is when you try for weeks, months or maybe even years to successfully lose fat, but yet fail to lose any noticeable amount of it.

Fun!

So, it's not bad results. It's virtually no results at all.

And this scenario is surprisingly common.

So common, in fact, that I've been there myself. I spent plenty of time early on spinning my wheels and getting absolutely nowhere. I'd say that most people have been there before, too.

Many in this position give up completely. What do you expect? Many others only give up *temporarily*. So, they'll try to lose fat, fail and then quit… but then try all over again every so often (every New Year, perhaps) only to repeat the same "try and fail" process.

Sound familiar?

Then you have people who are much too dedicated or motivated to ever quit, but potentially obsessed/crazy/stupid enough to go on getting the same nonexistent results for the rest of their lives.

Every gym has people like this. The "regulars" who have been there for years (sometimes even decades) and don't appear to look any better than they did the first day they showed up.

And most of us know people like this outside of the gym, too. The friend or family member who tells you they're going to start "working out" and "eating right" so they can "lose fat" and "get lean," but yet nothing ever happens. That fat is never lost. Their bodies never improve.

Why is this? What causes a person to end up in this category where they fail to lose *any* fat at all and get *no* results?

Oh come on… that's easy.

They didn't create a consistent caloric deficit. That's all there is to it.

Like I've said approximately 80 billion times already, this is the only fundamental requirement of fat loss. So, if you've ever failed or are still currently failing to lose any fat at all, this is the guaranteed reason why 100% of the time.

Now, why would a person *not* have a consistent caloric deficit?

A few reasons.

The first is a simple matter of doing the sort of stuff we covered earlier. You know, like **focusing on various non-calorie-based *things* instead of calories**, and/or **attempting to lose fat via an indirect deficit instead of a direct deficit**. In these cases, if a person actually manages to have a consistent deficit present, it's thanks to nothing but pure blind luck. Unfortunately, most people don't end up being quite that lucky. And so… no deficit = no results. Simple as that.

In many other cases, however, the person will try to directly create a consistent caloric deficit like they should, but… *it just doesn't happen*.

Why not, you ask? Due to two different categories of **noncompliance**:

1. **Known Noncompliance**
   This is when a person is eating more calories and/or burning less calories than they need to be for a consistent deficit to exist… ***and they know it***. They know they're overeating. They know they're missing workouts. They know they're simply not doing what needs to be done. Why does this happen? For any or all of the usual reasons. A lack of motivation. An over-reliance on motivation (more about that later). A lack of consistency. A lack of self-control. General laziness. An inability to form the necessary habits. Using an unsustainable dietary approach that conflicts with personal preferences. And so on. Whatever it is, the person knows they are failing to comply with the requirements of their diet and/or workout, and that's preventing a deficit from consistently being present.

2. **Unknown Noncompliance**
   This is when the same sort of thing happens (they're eating more and/or burning less than they need to be for a deficit to exist), but, in this case… ***they don't actually know it***. Rather, they THINK they're doing everything right, when in reality they are unknowingly making mistakes somewhere (most often in the tracking of their calorie intake and/or output) which cause them to end up eating more calories and/or burning less calories than they think they are. Like I mentioned earlier, this kind of thing happens all the time.

Basically, what it comes down to is this…

Being some degree below your maintenance level is all it takes for fat loss to occur, and everyone in this category is simply failing to consistently make it happen.

PROBLEM #2: INFERIOR RESULTS

Then you have people who were able to get past Problem #1 and actually end up getting some degree of positive results. Meaning, they've successfully lost or are currently in the process of losing some amount of body fat.

Hooray!

Well, not quite.

As if I have to tell you, **there are different degrees of success a person can have when it comes to losing fat**.

In this category, we'll define that degree of success as being "not so good." Or at least, somewhere below what you realistically *want* it to be or perhaps just below what it realistically *could* be.

You know… like when you want above-average results, but what you end up getting is below-average results. Or, at the very best, just average.

Basically, your fat loss results are inferior to what they are truly capable of being.

Sound familiar? Yeah… I know the feeling. I have years of experience getting results ranging from okay, to bad, to so-so, to total crap, to "why does it seem like everyone else's results are better than mine?"

And while there are many examples of this, there are really just a few that encompass them all:

- **You get good results at first, but bad results after that.**
  Maybe you lose some fat early on. Maybe your first few weeks (or even your first few months) go pretty well. Maybe it's a nice starting point of progress, or maybe it's something even greater. But then, after that, *nothing*. After those initial good results, your progress sucks. So, for example, maybe you want to lose 50 lbs, and the first 10 lbs come off relatively quick and easy. But the other 40 lbs? *Not so much*. Or maybe the opposite scenario takes place. So you manage to lose the first 40 lbs, but it's the last 10 lbs that seem impossible. Or maybe it's something in between. Whatever it is, after successfully losing some fat, your situation switches over to something like Problem #1 where you're no longer losing any (additional) fat or getting any (additional) positive results.

- **You're not losing fat as quickly and effectively as you could be.**
  In this case, you ARE getting results past that initial stage. Things ARE working. You ARE consistently losing fat. Just… *not very well*. So maybe progress is happening a lot slower than you had realistically hoped it would, and fat isn't being lost as fast or as well as it could/should be (e.g., it's taking you 2-3 times longer than it should to reach each of your short-term and long-term goals). Or maybe your progress slows down more often than it should, or it stalls and you hit a plateau more often than you should, and then maybe you have more trouble "breaking through" those plateaus than you should. Whatever it may be, you're just not maximizing your results or making the type of optimal progress you're capable of making.

- **You're losing fat just fine, but you're still unhappy with how your body looks.**
  You know what sucks? When you decide you want to lose fat… and then you begin losing it and making great progress… but then you look in the mirror and realize you still hate how your body looks. At this point, you expected to look leaner, or more fit, or more toned, or more defined, or more muscular, or more ripped, or more [insert your favorite adjective here], but instead you find that you just look soft, or flabby, or thin, or skinny, or weak, or most common of all… *skinny-fat*. So even though you're able to lose fat, your body still doesn't look as good as you want it to.

- **You're unintentionally making fat loss harder for yourself than it needs to be.**
  Maybe you're effectively losing fat. Maybe you're even maximizing your progress. Maybe you're well on your way to reaching all of your goals at an ideal rate. But… maybe the diet, workout and/or lifestyle adjustments that are allowing you to get these results are simply not as preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable for you as they could/should be. Which means, you're unintentionally approaching fat loss in a manner that is making it harder and more unpleasant for you than it truly needs to be. So even though you're happy with your results, you're unhappy with the process. Or, maybe you're not even aware that the process doesn't have to be this bad.

- **You're losing too much muscle while trying to only lose body fat.**
  You know what? This one is way beyond a small bullet point…

PROBLEM #3: LOSING TOO MUCH MUSCLE

Stop me if you've heard this one.

Your goal is to lose fat. Ugly, icky, unwanted body fat. So, you come up with the perfect workout, set up the perfect diet, ensure that a caloric deficit is consistently present, and then proceed to put it all into action to the best of your ability.

However, as time starts to go by, you begin to notice something. You're definitely losing some fat, but… there's something else that seems to be happening as well.

You're losing muscle!

Not tons of muscle or anything. Just slowly and gradually losing some amount of muscle (and probably strength as well) along with the small amounts of fat you're losing. You're not happy about it, but you continue on with what you're doing anyway.

As more time passes, you're noticing something else. You're still losing fat, but yet the amount of lean muscle you continue to lose along with it seems to be increasing by the week.

And it's ruining everything!

After all, one of the main reasons you wanted to lose this fat in the first place was so you could look lean, toned, defined, fit, ripped, strong, athletic, sculpted, chiseled, sexy, muscular and [insert more of your favorite adjectives here]. But, one of the two requirements of actually looking like this (the first of course being to lose fat) **is having some muscle… *and now you're losing that muscle***!

And that's not good.

Muscle is the biggest difference maker between losing fat and **looking *lean***, and losing fat and **looking *skinny-fat***.

Muscle (or a lack thereof) is the key factor separating these outcomes.

But when you end up in this category, that's what happens. You're successfully losing body fat (yay!), but you're also simultaneously losing noticeable amounts of muscle along with it (boo!).

Does this scenario sound familiar? Have you been there before? I certainly have. I've soooo been there and done that. It seems the majority of the people trying to lose fat have been there, too.

In my case, I used to spend months in a "bulking" phase trying to build a decent amount of muscle mass without gaining too much body fat. From there, I'd switch over to a "cutting" phase to lose whatever unwanted new body fat I may have gained, only to unintentionally end up losing *some*, or *most*, or occasionally even *all* of the new muscle that I built right along with it.

Thus, I ended up right back where I started and would essentially repeat the same terrible process over and over with the only difference being that I'd look and feel slightly worse after each cycle of failure.

Ah yes, the memories.

What about you? Does any part of that scenario sound familiar?

I'm sure something here does. Because, as much as people want to avoid losing muscle while losing fat, and as much as they do things to try to prevent it from happening, **it still happens ALL THE TIME**.

Which leads us to a very obvious question: **why**?

Well, I have two words for ya…

CALORIE PARTITIONING

One thing you'll notice throughout this book (including within its own title) is that I rarely use the term "weight loss." *I hate that term*. You should hate it, too.

The reason why goes back to something I mentioned earlier, which is the fact that "weight" can be a lot of different things. For example… water, glycogen, poop, fat or muscle. Hell, you can cut off a leg and you'll lose "weight" just fine.

However, when someone says they want to "lose weight," what they're really saying is that they want to lose *fat*. And only fat. Nothing else. Not water, not glycogen, not poop, not one of their legs.

And above all else… *NOT MUSCLE*!

The only problem with this is that the sole cause and requirement of losing fat is creating a caloric deficit. Remember why? Because doing so causes your body to burn some alternative fuel source for energy instead.

Now, in a perfect world, that alternative fuel source would ALWAYS be your stored body fat.

Unfortunately, like I also mentioned earlier, your stored body fat is not the only fuel source available. **Your muscle tissue can be burned for this very purpose as well.**

Sure, you might want your body to only burn body fat and never muscle, but your body doesn't really give a crap about what you want. It just knows that in order for it to survive and function in the calorie deficient state it is being placed in, it will need to pull stored energy from somewhere.

And that "somewhere" can just as easily be your **body fat**, your **muscle tissue**, or a **combination of both**.

And that's where a little something called "calorie partitioning" comes into play.

Calorie partitioning refers to where stored calories will be pulled from when you're in a deficit and your body is looking for a backup energy source to burn. It also refers to where excess calories will be stored (i.e., as body fat, muscle tissue or both) when you're in a surplus and consuming more of them than your body needs.

Now, obviously, we all want *amazing* calorie partitioning. The kind that ensures every single bit of backup energy we burn is coming from stored body fat and *only* stored body fat. (And every surplus calorie we consume is stored only as muscle and never as body fat.)

But, as most people (myself included) have already experienced firsthand, this isn't what actually happens. Not even close.

Thanks to a variety of less-than-ideal genetic factors that most of us already possess (which will unfortunately get even worse the longer we are in a deficit… more about that in a minute), and the suboptimal way most of us approach fat loss in terms of our diet and training… our calorie partitioning ends up being far from amazing.

In fact, **our calorie partitioning is often the complete opposite of amazing**.

As if that wasn't bad enough, a fun bonus fact is that muscle is not needed for survival (beyond a small necessary bare minimum, at least). And, even worse, it requires more energy to maintain than body fat does. Which means, to your body, muscle is not only something it doesn't need, it's something it actually *benefits* from getting rid of when it's in an energy deficient state and trying to keep you alive.

Combine all of this together and you quickly begin to realize why losing muscle while losing fat is not only a possibility, *it's an extremely common reality*.

PROBLEM #4: IT'S HARD, IT SUCKS, AND YOUR BODY FIGHTS BACK

Losing fat is simple.

That's right, I said it.

Create a consistent caloric deficit. That's all it takes, and that's honestly as simple as can be.

The problem, however, is that there's a big difference between something being *simple* and something being *easy*. And in this case, fat loss is that something.

Just ask any of the millions of people who have ever tried and failed at losing fat. Hell, ask any of the millions of people who have ever tried and *succeeded* at losing fat. Or, better yet, just ask yourself. Chances are you've tried this before and know from experience.

If there is one thing all of us can probably agree on, it's that **losing body fat is hard and it sucks**.

I'm not going to lie and pretend that it doesn't. *It does*. Let's get that out of the way right now. Losing fat is hard, and it sucks.

Trust me, I wish that wasn't the case. But it is.

And this fact is often the underlying reason why most people fail to reach their fat loss goals. Doing what needs to be done for fat to be lost involves doing things that are hard, and things that just plain suck. And us humans don't like doing things that fit that description.

The question is, though… why? Why is it so hard? Why does it suck so much? What is preventing fat loss from being as easy as it is simple?

Well, it comes down to two types of factors:

1. **External factors** that are mostly under our control.
2. **Internal factors** that are mostly out of our control.

Let's take a look at each…

THE EXTERNAL FACTORS

This is simply our **diet** and **training**. They are the external factors that we are mostly in control of.

Obviously, we can't change the fact that a caloric deficit is needed, but we do control virtually everything else in terms of the diet and workout we use to implement that deficit as well as the overall approach we use when putting it all together.

So, what part of these external factors contribute to fat loss being something that is hard and something that sucks?

You actually know the answer to this one already, because it was part of one of our previous problems. Allow me to quote myself from a few pages ago…

> *"But… maybe the diet, workout and/or lifestyle adjustments that are allowing you to get these results are simply not as preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable for you as they could/should be. Which means, you're unintentionally approaching fat loss in a manner that is making it harder and more unpleasant for you than it truly needs to be."*

Bingo.

Basically, every time you design a single major or minor aspect of your diet and/or workout in a way that goes against your personal needs or preferences, you are instantly making fat loss harder and suckier for you than it ever has to be.

Want a few examples of how this can happen? Okay…

1. **Food Choices**
   Let's pretend you love Food X. It's your favorite food. Let's also pretend you hate Food Z. Now let's say you've designed your diet in a manner that involves doing one of those **unnecessary** "things" we covered earlier. And, it turns out that this "thing" requires you to completely avoid eating Food X and eat plenty of Food Z. Right there, your diet has instantly gone against your personal preferences and, in doing so, will only make losing fat harder and suckier for you than it actually has to be.

2. **Workout Scheduling**
   Let's pretend your schedule only provides you with 3 convenient days to work out each week. Awesome. However, you decide to use a workout program that involves doing 4 or 5 weekly workouts instead. In doing so, you've just **unnecessarily** put yourself in a less convenient

scenario that doesn't suit your needs. Can you make it work? Maybe. Can you sustain it? Maybe. Will fat loss be some degree harder and suckier for you because of it? *Yes*.

3. Food Group Restrictions

Let's pretend you love eating carbs. Or meat. Or dairy. Or non-Paleo foods. Or grains. Or wheat. Or whatever the hell else. Now let's pretend you decide to lose fat by using a low carb diet. Or a vegan diet. Or a dairy-free diet. Or a Paleo diet. Or any diet that requires you to (**unnecessarily**) greatly restrict or completely eliminate an entire food group that you actually enjoy eating and would much rather NOT greatly restrict or completely eliminate. Guess what just happened? Losing fat has now become harder and suckier for you than it truly has to be.

4. Eating Rules

Let's pretend you love eating breakfast, but your intermittent fasting diet **unnecessarily** requires you to skip it. Or, let's pretend you only have time to eat 3 meals per day (and you like it that way), but your diet **unnecessarily** requires you to eat 6 small meals per day instead. Or, let's pretend you like having a late dinner, but your diet **unnecessarily** requires you to stop eating at 7:00 PM. In every single case, you're **unnecessarily** doing things that are the opposite of what you'd prefer to be doing, and that's only going to make fat loss harder and suckier for you than it needs to be.

5. Lifestyle Restrictions

The examples mentioned above (and others like them) come together to cause a variety of lifestyle related problems. For example, what happens when you're out socially with friends or family and they're all eating foods that you're not allowed to eat? Or going to a restaurant that doesn't serve the kinds of foods on your "allowed" list? Or maybe they just want to eat at a time when you're not allowed to be eating? Basically, your ability to be a normal person doing normal things with normal people in a social setting **unnecessarily** becomes a lot harder and suckier than it has to be.

6. Extremes

Let's pretend someone figured out that they need to eat 2000 calories per day to be in a deficit and lose fat at an ideal rate (this is just a completely random number, by the way). Let's now pretend they also happen to be impatient and want to lose fat even faster than this ideal rate. So, they decide to **unnecessarily** create a much larger deficit and eat 1200 calories per day instead. What do you think will be harder and suck more? Eating 2000 calories per day, or eating 1200 calories per day? *Exactly*. And which do you think will be more

realistically doable for this example person? *Exactly*. And which do you think will greatly increase this example person's risk of failing to stick to their diet at some point? *Exactly*.

There are more examples of this, but I think you get the point.

We control the diet and workout we use to make fat loss happen, and each of us should be putting everything together in the most preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable way possible (#PECS) so that fat loss is as easy for each individual as it can realistically be.

But, for one reason or another… *we don't*. We often do the opposite. And the entire process of losing fat **unnecessarily** becomes worse because of it.

THE INTERNAL FACTORS

Now for the internal factors that are mostly out of our control.

And it all goes back to something I cryptically mentioned in the first chapter of this book…

> *"To us, fat is just unnecessary stuff that makes our bodies look bad. But to your body, the only way you could ever truly look 'bad' is if you were dead. So, your body will gladly take backup fuel, soft padding and warm insulation over looking pretty any day of the week.*
>
> *Not only that, but your body will also go out of its way to ensure that this fat remains on you for these very same reasons, including during periods of time when you are purposely trying to get rid of it.* ***Hell, especially during periods of times when you are purposely trying to get rid of it.****"*

Pay extra attention to that last sentence in bold.

This is the main reason why losing fat is so damn hard and sucks so much.

Your body is fighting against it.

Remember, your body only cares about survival. It is designed for the sole purpose of adapting to the situations it is placed in so it can do whatever needs to be done to keep you alive.

The thing is, it doesn't know if you're in a caloric deficit because you're trying to lose fat and improve the way your body looks, feels and functions, or if you're in a caloric deficit because you no longer have access to a sufficient amount of food and are about to starve to death.

So, it responds the same way to both scenarios.

And that is by doing every single thing it can possibly do to prevent this from happening.

You can almost think of it as if a bunch of internal alarms start going off within various parts of your body which then cause a wide range of impressive safety measures to automatically go into effect.

All of which serve one very specific purpose: **fighting back against your attempt to lose fat**.

And so it does. It fights back, and it fights back hard. In a variety of ways that only get stronger and harder and suckier for us the closer we get to reaching our goals.

This is why losing fat is always easiest at the very beginning when you have a lot more of it to lose, and then gradually becomes harder from that point on. The more fat you lose and the leaner you slowly begin to get, the louder those alarms get and the harder your body fights back to keep this from continuing.

Basically, what you view as "getting closer to your goal" is the same thing your body views as "getting closer to dying of starvation." So, it works even harder to prevent it.

Now, you might be wondering what kind of internal factors are at play here.

As in, what exactly does your body do to fight back that makes fat loss so much harder and suckier for us than we want it to be?

Good question. Here are the answers…

1. **Hunger and appetite increase.**
   As if I have to tell you, one of, if not THE main thing that sucks about losing fat is the increase in hunger and appetite that always comes with it. After all, in order to lose that fat, you need to be below your maintenance level. Which means, you need to eat some degree less than the amount that you have physiologically and psychologically become accustomed to eating. And, like it or not, **that's always going to make you hungry to some extent**. Yes, this sucks for you. But, it's great for your body's survival goal. Because, if you're hungry, you're more likely to eat. And the more you eat, the less likely you're going to be to remain in a deficit and continue losing fat. Which is exactly what your body is fighting to accomplish, even though you're trying to do the opposite.

2. **Leptin decreases.**

Leptin, nicknamed the "satiety hormone," is one of the hormones responsible for regulating hunger and body weight. It is created and released primarily from within your fat cells, and serves the role of being a sort of "message carrier" between your fat cells and your brain. What kind of messages is it sending, you ask? Well, the main jobs of leptin are to tell your brain how much body fat you have, how much you're eating, and send the signal that you're full when you are full. As it turns out, the fatter you are and/or the more you're eating, the higher your leptin levels are (because you're perceived as being in a sufficiently fed or overfed state). But the leaner you are and/or the less you're eating, the lower your leptin levels are (because you're perceived as being in an underfed state). Why does this matter to us? **Because a caloric deficit qualifies as an *underfed* state, which causes leptin to decrease. And when leptin decreases, a signal is sent to your brain that tells it you need more food.** How does your brain respond to this signal? ***By making you hungry***, thus causing you to eat more food. Which is all to say that when leptin decreases, hunger increases. It's a significant contributor to what makes you hungry enough to want to eat more than you're supposed to be eating.

3. **Ghrelin increases.**

Ghrelin, nicknamed the "hunger hormone," is another hormone responsible for regulating hunger (among other things), and kinda works the opposite of leptin. Meaning, when leptin decreases, ghrelin increases… partly in response to that decrease in leptin. Basically, **ghrelin is the hormone that stimulates hunger**. It goes up right before you eat a meal (when your stomach is empty and you feel hungry), and drops soon after (when your stomach is full and you're no longer hungry). But guess what happens when you're in a caloric deficit and losing fat? Baseline levels of ghrelin increase and continue to increase the longer you remain in this state. Why? To make you hungry enough to eat more. Why? So you get out of this calorie deficient fat-loss-causing state as soon as possible.

4. **Metabolic rate decreases.**

This is often referred to as "**metabolic slowdown**," and there are many factors that contribute to it (more about them in a second). But, basically, **when you go into a caloric deficit and begin losing fat, your metabolic rate will gradually slow down and continue doing so for whatever duration of time you remain in that deficit and continue losing fat**. Why does this happen? Some of it is just simple math, and some of it is your body trying to minimize your deficit and prevent fat loss from continuing. Why? To keep you alive. So, as you begin losing fat, your metabolic rate gradually decreases… which means your maintenance level gradually decreases… which means the number of calories that would constitute being in a deficit gradually decreases along with it. This way, less and less of a deficit will be present, and thus

less and less body fat will be lost. If it goes on long enough, a point will eventually be reached when the deficit no longer exists at all and fat loss comes to a stop. What factors make this happen? Well…

5. **BMR decreases.**

BMR is your basal metabolic rate, which is the amount of calories your body burns at rest just keeping you alive and functioning. So, imagine the number of calories you'd burn if you stayed in bed all day not moving (or digesting food). That amount of calories is your BMR, and it accounts for the majority (typically 60-75%) of the calories your body burns each day. The thing is, as you lose weight, *this number gradually decreases* (which contributes significantly to the issue of metabolic slowdown). **The cause of this is the simple fact that a smaller body burns fewer calories.** So, whatever your BMR is today, it will be something less than that after you've lost 10 lbs. And it will be something less than that after you've lost an additional 10 lbs. And so on. Basically, the less you weigh, the lower your BMR will be due to nothing more than the fact that bigger bodies burn more calories than smaller bodies. (By the way, RMR – resting metabolic rate – represents a slightly different version of the same thing that BMR represents. But, in this context, you can consider them one and the same.)

6. **TEA decreases.**

TEA stands for Thermic Effect of Activity. This represents all of the calories your body burns each day via exercise. But guess what? Since a smaller body burns fewer calories, **the amount of calories you burn during exercise will gradually decrease as you gradually lose weight**. So, for example, let's say you weigh 250 lbs. Let's also say you run on a treadmill, or ride a bike, or lift weights (or whatever else) and burn X calories doing so. When you get down to 200 lbs and perform that same form of exercise for the same duration of time at the same level of intensity, you'll now burn an amount of calories that is some degree less than X. Yet again, another factor contributing to metabolic slowdown.

7. **TEF decreases.**

TEF is the Thermic Effect of Food. This is defined as the calories your body burns during the digestion and absorption process of the foods you eat. But, in order for a caloric deficit to exist, you need to eat some degree less than you were previously eating. **And so less food being eaten = less calories burned via TEF.** While this is much less of a contributing factor than the others (it typically accounts for 10% or so of the calories your body burns each day), it's still a small part of what causes metabolic slowdown.

8. **NEAT decreases.**

NEAT (non-exercise activity thermogenesis) is defined as the calories burned as a result of all of the little things you do over the course of the day BESIDES exercise… which includes unconscious, spontaneous daily movement (i.e., the seemingly minor movements you make throughout the day that you didn't consciously plan to make). This actually accounts for a *surprisingly significant* amount of the calories that people burn each day, though it can vary quite a bit from one person to the next. The thing is, though, **NEAT decreases when you are in a deficit… thus causing you to unintentionally (and unknowingly) burn less calories each day**, thus contributing to the issue of metabolic slowdown.

9. **Adaptive thermogenesis occurs.**

Adaptive thermogenesis is defined as the decrease in the number of calories your body burns each day beyond what would be predicted to occur from the loss of body weight alone. Meaning, once you factor in things like the decrease in BMR, TEA and TEF to try to estimate how much a person's metabolic rate *should* slow down after they lose a certain amount of weight, **their metabolic rate will usually end up slowing down some degree more than that predicted amount**. Why? Because your body is adapting to your deficit and doing everything it can to conserve energy stores for the purpose of keeping you alive/preventing you from starving to death. I should note, however, that while this adaptive component of metabolic slowdown is *definitely real*, it's actually much smaller than most people think (such as the people who incorrectly believe it's the cause of "starvation mode").

10. **Lethargy increases.**

Ever notice that eating less than you normally do makes you feel a bit **more tired and lazy than you usually are**? That's not your imagination. A caloric deficit is an energy deficit, and being in that state often makes people lethargic. So, you end up in this ironic scenario where you're purposely eating less to create a deficit… but being in that deficit makes you more lethargic… **which then causes you to do less/move around less throughout the day**… **which causes you to burn less calories than you normally would have**… which makes the deficit you're trying to create some degree smaller than you're intending for it to be. All of which contributes to the previously mentioned issues with NEAT and metabolic slowdown.

11. **Thyroid decreases.**

Your thyroid hormones are mainly responsible for regulating your metabolism. When they are within the range of normal, your metabolic rate is typically normal as well. When they are below the range of normal, your thyroid is considered to be underactive – a condition known as hypothyroidism – where one of the most common symptoms experienced is fat gain and/or

the inability to lose fat (because an excessively slow metabolism causes an excessively low maintenance level… thus making fat gain much easier than it should be and fat loss much harder than it should be). The opposite scenario is known as hyperthyroidism. Medications are commonly used to treat both. Assuming your thyroid function is normal of course, this is *mostly* irrelevant information to you. However, what is relevant to you is the fact that **thyroid output gradually drops when you're in a caloric deficit, thus contributing to the issue of metabolic slowdown**.

12. Testosterone decreases.

Testosterone has been nicknamed everything from the "sex hormone" (because it plays a crucial role in our libido and sexual function), to the "muscle building hormone" (because it plays a crucial role in muscle growth and maintenance), to the "male hormone" (even though both men and women produce it and it plays similarly crucial roles for women – men just produce *way* more of it than women do). **Unfortunately for all of us (men and women), testosterone levels decrease when we're in a deficit** due to a handful of reasons (involving everything from cortisol, to insulin, to fat intake, to the simple fact that the "crucial roles" testosterone plays become a lot less "crucial" to your body when it's trying to keep you alive… as you'll see in a minute).

13. Cortisol increases.

Cortisol has been nicknamed the "stress hormone" (I honestly have no idea why hormone-nicknaming is such a popular thing) because it is released by the body in response to stress. For this reason, it is widely (and incorrectly) thought of as being "bad." Technically speaking, of course, *it's not*. In and of itself, at normal, healthy levels… it's perfectly fine and actually plays quite a few important positive roles within the body. However, prolonged elevated levels of cortisol… THAT'S problematic for a variety of reasons. It has been shown to suppress testosterone, hinder immune function, cause significant water retention, negatively affect calorie partitioning by promoting both fat storage and muscle loss, and more. Why does this matter to us? Because the more stress you experience, the higher your cortisol levels get. And, in addition to all of the usual life stress we regularly experience, **a caloric deficit itself represents a large form of stress to the body**. As do many of the other things that are directly or indirectly related to this deficit (e.g., physical forms of stress like weight training, cardio and insufficient sleep; mental stress like hunger, freaking out over your diet or lack of progress, or being annoyed/frustrated by the various other problems on this list, etc.).

14. Sleep quality decreases.

Thanks to a variety of the problems on this list, it's pretty common for people in a deficit to

eventually run into problems with sleep. As in, **trouble falling asleep and staying asleep through the night**… both of which tend to be worsened the larger the deficit is and, separately, the lower a person's carb intake is (carb intake and timing appear to be tied to sleep quality). As an added bonus, insufficient sleep has been shown to increase cortisol, decrease testosterone, decrease leptin, and increase ghrelin. How wonderful.

15. Energy spent on unessential things decreases.

Once again, a caloric deficit is literally an energy deficit. For this reason, your body is going to do everything it can to conserve energy and try to **reduce the number of calories being burned on things that it deems unessential**. So, what qualifies as "unessential" at a time when your body thinks you're starving to death? Oh, you know… just a bunch of things that you'd personally consider to be pretty damn essential. For example…

16. Muscle loss increases.

As we covered in Problem #3, **muscle can be (and very commonly is) burned for energy in a deficit**. Why? Because it's available, your body doesn't need it, things that help maintain it are decreasing (i.e., testosterone), things that raise the risk of losing it are increasing (i.e., cortisol), and it's more metabolically costly than body fat is.

17. Strength, performance and recovery decreases.

With all else being equal, when compared to being at maintenance or in a surplus, being in a deficit is when strength and training performance are at their worst. Especially when it comes to weight training. **Recovery is reduced. Volume tolerance is reduced. Work capacity is reduced. Fatigue is increased.** And more. Basically, if you were weight training consistently for a while without being in a deficit, and then you decide to go into a deficit, the odds are pretty high that you will eventually lose some strength and get some degree weaker on at least a few exercises (potentially all of them).

18. Libido decreases.

Interest in having sex tends to eventually decrease in a deficit (thank the drop in testosterone, among other things), especially when your deficit is larger, longer lasting and/or you reach very low levels of body fat. In fact, sex drive seems to drive right off a cliff under those combined circumstances.

19. Sexual function decreases.

In addition to your interest in sex, your ability to actually have that sex can take a hit as well. Especially for guys. Especially when the deficit is larger, longer lasting and/or you reach low

levels of body fat. So, even if your sexual interest is present (which it may not be), **your "equipment" might not be up to the task**. (Pun intended.)

20. Reproductive function decreases.

Technically, a man's inability to get it up belongs in this category as well, as that is a reproductive function after all. But in the case of females, **it's quite common for a woman to lose her period when reaching very low body fat levels and/or when in a very large caloric deficit** (due to severe caloric restriction, excessive amounts of exercise, or a combination of both).

21. Awareness of food increases.

A funny thing happens when you're trying to eat less food. You become more interested in food. And aware of it. And focused on it. And maybe even obsessed with it. Sometimes even dangerously so (i.e., eating disorders). You think more about what you're about to eat, or what you're going to eat next, or how long it will be until you eat after that, or what you're going to eat later, or tomorrow, or what other people are eating and on and on and on. **Food just becomes more of a thing on your mind than it usually is.**

22. Moodiness increases.

When a person is in a caloric deficit for the purpose of losing fat (or really when they're on virtually *any* diet for the purpose of losing fat), they tend to be a bit more moody than usual. **Maybe more easily annoyed or frustrated, more irritable, a little crankier. Sometimes just plain pissed off.** It's all a result of a combination of many of the other items on this list coming together to make you feel some degree crappier than you would under normal, non-diet conditions.

And more.

Seriously.

I can keep on going here, but something tells me I've already depressed you enough.

I didn't mean to, of course. I'm just stating the facts.

And the fact is that losing fat is hard, and it sucks.

But hey, look on the bright side. *At least now you know why*.

Simply put, in addition to the external factors that we often screw up on our own, there is this elaborate system of interconnected internal factors at play here that spring into action in a deficit for one reason and one reason only: **to fight back against your attempt to lose fat**.

This is why fat loss is so hard, why the process of losing fat sucks so much, and why most people fail to get the results they want.

Your body's survival goal just happens to be in direct opposition of your fat loss goal.

Which means… *your body is working to prevent what you're working to accomplish.*

PROBLEM #5: THE RESULTS DON'T LAST

Let's say you were somehow able to bypass all of the previous problems.

Or, much more likely, suffer through those problems long enough to finally reach your long-term fat loss goals.

Congrats! You did it! Cue the balloons and confetti!

The only thing that's left for you to do now is… **maintain it**.

You know, just for the next few days. And then the next few weeks. And then the next few months. And then the next few years. And then the next few decades.

What's the word I'm looking for here? Oh, I got it! You need to maintain it… *permanently*.

After all, you didn't work this hard for this long (while suffering through those previously mentioned problems) to lose all of the fat you wanted to lose and attain every positive thing that came along with it (a leaner body, a better-looking body, a healthier body, a more capable body, improved fitness, more self-confidence, etc.) just so you could regain that fat and return to how things were.

Hell no!

You didn't reach your fat loss goals so it could be a short-term thing. You didn't lose this fat *temporarily*. You didn't come this far to get these results only to lose them soon after.

Screw that!

But yet, that's what most people end up doing.

Try as they might, most people end up regaining at least some of the body fat they were able to lose. Many regain 100% of it. Hell, some people regain everything they lost AND MORE.

And if there's one thing that feels even worse than being in a state where you're fatter than you want to be, it's being able to lose that fat, reach your ideal "I did it!" state, and then eventually return back to that original state all over again.

That's one of the worst feelings in the world, and unfortunately, a lot of people end up feeling it.

Some of those people are so defeated by it that they remain in that state from that point on, never losing any meaningful amount of fat ever again. Many others are able to lose *some of it*, but never quite make it all the way back to where they were.

Most commonly, however, the people in this scenario lose some (maybe even all) of the fat they regained, only to gain some (or all) of it back at some point after… and then lose, and gain, and lose, and gain… over and over again for the rest of their lives.

Your typical "yo-yo dieter," so to speak.

And this all brings us to our next obvious question: **why does this kind of thing happen so often?**

I mean, if a person was able to do what they needed to do to lose fat in the first place, what stops them from continuing to do those things for the purpose of maintaining their results afterwards?

Well, I've found that there are four main causes…

THE FOUR REASONS FAT LOSS RESULTS DON'T LAST

- **Thinking nothing needs to be done to maintain it.**
  This is when a person works out, eats right and makes all of the lifestyle adjustments they needed to make to lose fat and reach their goals. But then, at that point, they think: "okay, now that I've reached my fat loss goals, I can stop doing all of these things and go back to normal." As in, stop working out, return to their old eating habits, and go back to doing everything they were doing that caused them to become fat (and stay fat) in the first place. As if you can apparently get the results you want, stop doing everything that got you those results, and then expect your body to magically stay the same for ever and ever. *Um, no*. That's not how this works.

- **There's an eventual lack of compliance.**
  As I mentioned back in Problem #1 ("No Results"), in this context, there are two forms of noncompliance… *known* noncompliance and *unknown* noncompliance. **Unknown noncompliance** is when you stop doing what you're supposed to be doing in terms of your diet and/or workout… *without even realizing it*. As I explained earlier, this occurs mostly as a result of mistakes in the tracking of your calorie intake and/or output. So, you think you're still eating and burning the right amount of calories to maintain your results, but you are unknowingly making mistakes somewhere that lead to you eating more calories and/or burning less calories than you think you are, thus causing fat to be regained.

Known noncompliance, on the other hand, is when *you know* you're eating more and/or burning less than you need to be to maintain your results. The main reason this happens at this point is simply because maintaining your results is still, you know, *hard*. It still takes effort. You still have to eat and work out a certain way. You still have to avoid the temptation to go back to your old habits. You still have to do things that are hard and sucky. And people are often unable to do all of that for the long term. Why? Largely due to the last two reasons on this list…

- **You lost fat in a manner that is unsustainable in the long-term.**
  This all goes back to something I've brought up a few times now. Which is, *unnecessarily* designing your diet or workout in a way **that doesn't suit your needs or preferences**, thus making it significantly harder to do and sustain. You remember… things like creating an indirect deficit instead of a direct deficit, forcing yourself to remove foods or entire food groups from your diet that you don't want (or actually *need*) to remove, eating foods you'd rather not be eating, eating at times when you'd rather not be eating, eating more or less meals per day than you'd rather be eating, working out on days that are inconvenient for you, various unsustainable extremes (excessively low calorie diets, etc.), and so on.

  Basically, if you lose fat in a way that makes things harder and suckier for you than they need to be, guess what's going to happen? Long-term maintenance and sustainability is going to be just as hard and sucky for you as well, only now you'll have to put up with it for years to come in order to maintain the results you got. *And that's very unlikely to happen*. But hey, that's just what's guaranteed to come with forcing yourself to unnecessarily do things that aren't as preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable (#PECS) for you as they should be.

- **You're relying too much on motivation.**
  A lot of people approach fat loss with **motivation** as the sole (or at least, primary) factor getting them to consistently do what needs to be done. This is great, except for one thing: **motivation doesn't last forever**. It goes up and down over the course of a day, comes and goes over the course of weeks, and completely vanishes and eventually reappears (if you're lucky) over the course of months, years and decades.

  Just like an emotion, motivation is something that you can feel strongly one minute and then not feel at all the next. Something that can be really high on Monday, but then really low on Tuesday. Something that is capable of gradually becoming less and less over time or suddenly

dying out in an instant… potentially never to return. **It's one of the most inconsistent feelings a person will ever experience.**

Yet, it's still the thing people rely on the most to get themselves to consistently do all of the things – big and small – that they need to be doing on a daily basis (working out, eating right, etc.) to reach and permanently maintain their fat loss goals.

Unfortunately, when you are relying on something so laughably fickle for this purpose, you're all but guaranteed to run into problems at some point. Most people reach that point when they are still in the early stages of losing fat. That's when the powerful feeling of motivation that got them to *start* working out/eating right begins to fade or disappear altogether. A VERY small number of people may actually be able to ride that initial wave of motivation all the way to the end and reach their long-term goals. However, it is here – when it becomes less about accomplishing a goal and more about maintaining something you've already accomplished (and doing so permanently) – that motivation hits its lowest low and the subsequent problems are at their worst. Which eventually leads to issues with compliance. Which eventually leads to fat being regained.

Do any of these scenarios sound familiar? I'm going to guess they do, because they happen *all the time*.

The truth is, all five of the problems we've covered throughout this chapter happen all the time. Which means that they can and will affect *every single person* who ever tries to lose any amount of body fat.

Yes, even the people who ended up doing really well and have successfully reached all of their fat loss goals. Even *they* had to deal with some or all of these problems, and they're likely still dealing with them as we speak.

And you? The person sitting there reading this right now?

Yeah… something tells me you know about these problems all too well. They may even be why you purchased this book in the first place.

Which of course leads us to one very important question…

What the hell can we do to solve them?

CHAPTER 5

The Solution

THE SOLUTION

Well, I have some good news and some bad news.

The good news is that the first problem – not getting any fat loss results – is mostly taken care of.

After all, that's what the entire first and second chapters of this book were for. To lay the foundation for what a successful fat loss program requires. *Create a consistent caloric deficit.*

As long as you do that, Problem #1 is solved.

That was simple enough, wasn't it?

The bad news, however, is that the other four problems – inferior fat loss results, losing too much muscle, the fact that it's hard, it sucks and your body fights back, and being unable to maintain your results after you reach your goals – are a bit trickier.

You see, solving Problem #1 is what allows us to lose fat. **It's the difference between everything working and everything not working.** Plain and simple.

Solving Problems #2, #3, #4 and #5 on the other hand… that's what will take things one crucial step further.

How so? **Because solving these problems will be the difference between everything working, and *everything working well*.**

What I mean by that is, our goal is no longer to simply lose fat. We're not trying to get things to *just* work. We don't want to *only* get results.

That's not good enough anymore.

What we REALLY want to do here is get the best results we're capable of getting.

Not by doing what works, *but by doing what works best*.

Fat loss? No thanks.

What we want here is **superior fat loss**.

FAT LOSS VS SUPERIOR FAT LOSS

Create a consistent caloric deficit.

There are tons of different ways to do this. Countless diet methods. Countless training approaches. Countless ways to design your overall fat loss program around this requirement.

And as long as you do that, ALL of those ways will work.

But here's the thing. Some will only work okay and do little to nothing to solve these problems, while others will work significantly better and approach things in a manner that is about losing fat as equally as it is about avoiding, minimizing or completely eliminating every single problem that comes along with it.

That second scenario? *That's the one we want*. That's EXACTLY what we want.

To get it, we're going to need a slightly different set of requirements:

1. Design our diet and training in a way that maximizes fat loss and ensures that our progress is happening as quickly, consistently and effectively as it ideally should be.
2. Optimize our diet and training to simultaneously maintain as much lean muscle as realistically possible (and, in some cases, *build more of it*) while fat is being lost.
3. Prepare for all of the ways the human body is going to fight back against our attempt to lose fat, and adjust accordingly to minimize and/or prevent them.
4. Adjust every single major and minor factor in our favor to make the entire fat loss process as easy, preferable, enjoyable, convenient, sustainable and problem-free as realistically possible, thus ensuring that all of our short-term and long-term goals are successfully met and permanently maintained.

Which is all to say that a caloric deficit might be what determines if we get results or not, but exactly what we do and exactly how we do it determines the degree and probability of those results. And that's a fact we're going to take full advantage of.

Welcome to *Superior Fat Loss*.

CHAPTER 6

The Rate Of Weight Loss

THE RATE OF WEIGHT LOSS

Let's begin by figuring out your ideal rate of weight loss. As in, how much weight should you aim to lose per week? Exactly how fast or slow should your progress be happening?

The reason we're starting here, by the way, is because your rate of weight loss is the factor that directly dictates what your calorie intake (and deficit size) should ideally be, which then dictates what various other aspects of your diet should ideally be as well.

So, let's figure it out.

WAIT A SECOND… "WEIGHT" LOSS?

Okay, a quick clarification.

Remember earlier when I explained why I hate the term "weight loss" and said I would rarely be using it in this book? You know… because "weight" can be other things besides body fat (like water, glycogen, poop and muscle)?

Well, this is one of those rare occasions where "weight loss" is actually the right term to use.

The simple reason why is because **body fat weighs something**. Therefore, if you are consistently losing a meaningful amount of it, your body weight is going to gradually decrease to represent that reduction in fat.

And, since tracking your body weight on a scale is going to be the primary method of monitoring your fat loss progress (more about that later), your rate of overall weight loss becomes pretty important.

I say "overall weight loss" because **we can only track *overall weight loss***. Our scales can't tell us how much of the weight being lost is body fat and how much of it is something else. Your overall weight loss is all a scale is capable of showing you. Granted, there are those bioelectrical impedance scales that claim to specifically show body fat loss, but research and real-world experience have proven those types of scales to be terribly inaccurate most of the time (more about that later as well).

The reason I'm telling you this is so you know that the recommendations I'm going to give in this chapter apply to your overall rate of weight loss rather than just your rate of fat loss, because we're only truly capable of tracking the former.

Don't worry about it, though. This is fine. My recommendations throughout the book are going to take those other things (primarily water, glycogen and poop… we're going to avoid losing muscle, after all) into account. And I'm also going to show you how to avoid letting these other forms of "weight" interfere with your progress tracking in the first place.

Cool? Cool.

So, what should your rate of weight loss be?

That depends.

Do you want the **unrealistic** answer that you may have been tricked into expecting and are hoping to hear? Or do you want the **realistic** answer that will produce the best results possible?

You know what?

I'll give you both…

THE UNREALISTIC RATES OF WEIGHT LOSS

Alright. How fast should you lose weight?

The obvious answer from most people is always "**as fast as possible!**"

And that makes complete sense.

After all, the faster we're losing weight, the faster we're losing body fat, right? Which means the faster we're losing weight, the faster we're going to reach our long-term goals… *right*?

Not quite.

See, there are three very big problems with this "*as fast as possible*" line of thinking:

- The faster we attempt to lose weight, the more likely we are to **lose muscle**.
- The faster we attempt to lose weight, **the harder/suckier the whole process is going to be**, which means the less likely we're going to be able to actually do it and sustain it in the short or long-term.
- The faster we attempt to lose weight, the more likely we are to be chasing something that **isn't realistically possible**.

Those first two problems probably aren't going to surprise you. But the third? Let's talk a little about that one.

HOW FAST CAN WEIGHT LOSS *SUPPOSEDLY* HAPPEN?

Well, let's think about that.

- We've all seen the fat burning pills and supplements that claim to help us "Burn 30 lbs Of Fat In A Month… Without Exercise!"
- We've all seen the magazines, articles and various forms of advertising that say stuff like "Learn How To Melt Away 10 lbs Of Belly Fat Over Night!" or "Get The Sexy 6-Pack Abs Of Your Dreams In Just 3 Weeks!" or "The Secrets To Torching 20 lbs Of Stubborn Body Fat In Just 7 Days!"

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- We've all seen the before and after pictures of people who claim to have lost VERY significant amounts of fat in VERY short periods of time… and they swear it's all totally real and legit.
- We've all seen the products and programs guaranteeing "FAST weight loss," "QUICK weight loss" and "RAPID weight loss."
- We've all seen celebrities make impressive and surprisingly sudden changes to their bodies (often losing a ton of fat and gaining a ton of muscle) for their upcoming role in some movie.
- We've all seen the "natural" bodybuilders and fitness competitors (male and female) who have gotten extremely lean, and did it both impressively fast and without appearing to experience any of the problems we covered earlier (e.g., muscle loss, hormonal/metabolic issues, etc.).
- We've all seen that person somewhere (on the Internet, on social media, in a magazine, wherever) lose fat faster than most people do and claim it's purely a result of their "special" workout or "special" diet or "special" method or "special" product, and you too can get those same amazing results as long as you do the same "special" thing they supposedly did.

This is the kind of stuff we all see on a fairly regular basis, isn't it?

Funny thing about it though…

IT'S ALL BULLSHIT!

In some way, shape or form, *it's all bullshit*. All of it.

How so, you ask?

HA!

All kinds of ways.

- Sometimes it's simply lying about the supposed amount of fat that was lost and/or the time frame it supposedly took place during.
- Sometimes various tricks are used to make someone's before and after pictures look more impressive than they really are. Everything from camera angles, to lighting, to posture, to flexing, to Photoshop. Speaking of which…

- Photoshop is commonly used to make certain body parts look thinner/leaner (e.g., a man's stomach or a woman's thighs) while also making other body parts look bigger/better (e.g., a woman's butt). Not just with celebrities and fitness models on magazine covers, by the way. This shit happens all the time on social media. Instagram especially.

- Sometimes various steroids and drugs are used by people claiming to be "natural." It's pretty common among both men and women. Apparently fat loss becomes a whole lot faster and easier when you're using drugs to alter your thyroid levels, insulin levels, testosterone levels, growth hormone levels and so on. Apparently doing so greatly improves a person's ability to get really lean, really fast… all without losing muscle or struggling with the normal hormonal and metabolic issues the rest of us struggle with. *Who knew*?

- Sometimes the term "weight loss" is taken advantage of, thus allowing certain (stupid) people to claim that certain (useless) methods like detoxes, cleanses and juice fasts cause rapid "weight loss." Which is true. But what is never mentioned along with these claims is that all of that "weight" being lost is water rather than body fat, and it's all instantly regained as soon as you return to a normal (less-stupid) diet.

- Sometimes it's just blatant lies and deception. Nothing fancy about it. Just claiming something that is flat out false from top to bottom.

I can keep going here, but, once again, I think you get the idea.

Which is that… **it's… all… bullshit**.

And the best thing you can possibly do is ignore every single bit of it.

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WEIGHT LOSS

Why does it have to be this way, you ask?

Well, let me tell you a fun fact about the diet and fitness industry, just in case you weren't already aware…

Everyone wants your money, your attention and your trust.

And the only reason they want your attention and trust is so they can eventually get your money. That's all anyone really cares about.

This is true of damn near every supplement company, magazine, website, fitness guru, YouTube fitness guru, Instagram fitness guru, Facebook fitness guru, writer, blogger, author, model, trainer, coach, nutritionist, and so on.

If they are in any way connected to the diet and fitness industry, there is about a 95% chance that they are gladly willing to do whatever the hell is necessary to get your money, attention and trust no matter what kind of lies, deception and bullshit tactics they need to employ to make it happen.

And as it turns out, one of the very best ways of doing this is by **creating an illusion of unrealistic fat loss results**.

Why? Because they know you want AMAZING results, and you want them FAST. *We all do*. So, if they can convince you that you can lose fat much faster (and easier) than you actually can, it's all but guaranteed that your attention, trust and money will soon become theirs.

That's why every product, program and supplement comes with amazing fat loss claims. That's why every article is about making crazy amounts of progress.

Why should they waste their time promising you realistic results when they can just as easily promise you unrealistic results instead and get your money even faster?

And so that's exactly what they do.

And if you're like the majority of the population, you fall for it. Don't feel too bad though, most of us do at some point… me included.

The funny thing is that most people view this as a problem only because it causes people like us to waste our money, time and effort on crap. And while that's definitely true, that's unfortunately not the only problem.

You see, this illusion of unrealistic results clouds our perception of what's realistically possible. This lovely combination of deceptive sales/marketing tactics, blatant lies, bullshit claims and the amazing unnatural results of supposedly "natural" people gives us a false sense of what's actually possible.

THE PROBLEMS IT CAUSES

From there, it's only a matter of time before some very common scenarios begin to occur. For example…

- We jump from stupid diet and workout to even stupider diet and workout (and useless supplement to even more useless supplement) seeking the type of so-called "fast weight loss" we aren't legitimately capable of achieving but have been brainwashed into thinking we can. So we're basically left searching for something that doesn't exist, and we end up getting nowhere while we do it.

- We attempt to make these unrealistic results happen anyway, only to screw ourselves in the process by losing excessive amounts of muscle and strength, making things significantly harder for ourselves than they should ever be (e.g., being hungrier than we should ever be, ruining our social lives, etc.), making long-term results unsustainable, stressing out over all of this and the fact that we still aren't losing weight as fast as we think we should be, and on and on and on.

- We develop eating disorders, horrible relationships with food and body image disorders as we try (and fail) to recreate results that aren't achievable, compare our bodies to bodies that aren't nearly as real as they seem, and make progress that isn't legitimately possible.

Basically, the unrealistic expectations that come to exist in your mind are capable of not only screwing up your results, but preventing you from getting any results at all. Plus, as an added bonus, they can sometimes even lead to serious physical and/or mental health problems.

How wonderful.

This is why we need to ignore the unrealistic rates of weight loss that we've been tricked into believing, and focus solely on what's truly and realistically possible and ideal.

Speaking of which…

THE REALISTIC RATES OF WEIGHT LOSS

A few pages ago, I asked the following question: how fast should you lose weight?

The *initial* obvious answer we came up with was "as fast as possible!"

At this point, however, we now understand the many problems associated with that answer, and why striving for the goal of "as fast as possible" will at best cause us to waste a lot of time, money and effort chasing unrealistic results, and at worst do much more harm than good.

With that now in mind, let me ask the same question again: **how fast should you lose weight**?

There are now three potential answers to this question…

1. **(Realistically) Fast**
2. **Slow**
3. **Moderate**

Let's take a look at the pros and cons of each and determine which one is the most ideal for you.

OPTION 1: (REALISTICALLY) FAST

✓ **Pros:**

There is really only one "pro" to this option, and it's the one you're already thinking: **weight loss will be happening as fast as it is realistically capable of happening**. Yup, that's right, the main benefit of losing weight at the fastest (realistic) rate possible is that you end up… *losing weight at the fastest (realistic) rate possible*. Obvious, I know. And that means you'll end up reaching your fat loss goals as fast as realistically possible as well.

✘ **Cons:**

The big downside to losing weight at the fastest (realistic) rate possible is that **it requires the largest caloric deficit of the three options**. And, while I keep using the word "realistic" to emphasize that this is nowhere near the insanity of the type of unrealistically fast weight loss we previously covered, and the degree of caloric deficit it entails is also nowhere near that excessive level either, *the deficit it would require is still relatively large*. Which means… remember all of those problems that come about when we try to lose fat? **Well, the larger your deficit is, the worse every single one of those problems is going to be.**

So, compared to the other two options, the amount of food you can eat will be at its lowest and/or the amount of exercise you'll need to do will be at its highest (since the deficit is so large, this option requires the largest amount of diet/workout/lifestyle changes to be made and necessitates the most restriction and self-control).

In addition, the risk of muscle and strength loss will be at its highest. Training performance and recovery will be at their lowest. Metabolic slowdown will be at its worst. Hunger and appetite will be at their worst. Sleep quality will be at its worst. Testosterone will be at its lowest. Cortisol will be at its highest. NEAT will be at its lowest. Lethargy will be at its worst. Adaptive thermogenesis will be at its worst. Libido will be at its worst. Your mood will be at its worst. Eating socially will be at its most annoying. The potential for bingeing will be at its highest. The likelihood of loose skin will be at its highest. The likelihood of nutrient deficiencies will be at its highest. And more.

This is the option that will cause your body to fight back the hardest, which means the entire fat loss process will take place under its hardest, most sucky, least-consistently-doable-in-the-short-term and least-consistently-sustainable-in-the-long-term conditions.

- **Most Ideal For:** **Practically no one.**

  That one pro is certainly appealing, but that appeal is voided by this long list of cons and the fact that they can so easily (and commonly) prevent fat loss from happening *well*, or from even happening *at all*. For this reason, **I do not recommend this option to the majority of the population, especially those seeking superior fat loss results**. Which, of course, *we are*.

  Are there exceptions? Sometimes. For example, maybe someone is overweight to a degree that is currently compromising their health and their doctor has recommended this faster rate of weight loss to alleviate that situation as soon as possible. Then you have the VERY few *intelligently designed* "rapid weight loss" programs out there that are meant for short term use only (Lyle McDonald's "The Rapid Fat Loss Handbook" comes to mind). But, even then, those programs are – often at the admission of their creator – *extremely hard* and *not ideal for most people*.

OPTION 2: SLOW

✓ **Pros:**

You know everything I just said about the pros and cons of a (realistically) fast rate of weight loss? Well, with a slow rate of weight loss, *it's the complete opposite*. The obvious reason why is because **a slow rate of weight loss will require the smallest caloric deficit of the three options**. Which means… **every single problem that is associated with losing fat will be at their least problematic**. All of the issues with hunger and appetite, the risk of muscle and strength loss, the effects on training performance and recovery, all of the hormonal stuff, the metabolic issues, sleep, libido, NEAT, lethargy, mood and so on will all be at their best and most ideal, comparatively speaking.

Not to mention, since the amount of calories being reduced is so low, the fewest dietary changes will be needed (and/or the least amount of exercise will be needed), and the least amount of restrictions and self-control will be required. And your body, while still definitely fighting back, will now be putting up the least amount of fight possible. Which means, the entire fat loss process will take place under the easiest, least sucky, *most*-consistently-doable-in-the-short-term and *most*-consistently-sustainable-in-the-long-term conditions.

✘ **Cons:**

The only major con of a slow rate of weight loss is… say it with me… ***a slow rate of weight loss***. Here we have something that we all want to do as fast as possible. But, of the three options, this is the one that will do it the slowest. **Therefore, it's going to take the longest amount of time to reach your fat loss goals in the long-term, and the longest amount of time to actually see fat loss progress in the short-term.**

Now, sure, this option *does* have a very enticing list of pros. And yes, we most definitely *do* want all of those things. They would be ideal for us. BUT, are we willing to obtain all of those pros in exchange for losing fat at a rate that most people will view as unnecessarily, unbearably, discouragingly, depressingly… slow?

- **Most Ideal For:** **A small percentage of the population.**

  This option has a lot that I like, but the one thing I don't like (how slow fat loss is going to occur) will be a major deal breaker for most people. Most of us just aren't patient enough to go this slow and wait this long to get results. In many cases, that lack of patience combined with such a slow rate of visible progress (which is often a strong motivational factor by itself) will be enough to cause compliance issues for a lot of people and maybe even make them say "the hell with this!" at some point and give up altogether.

  For these reasons, plus the fact that going this slow is simply unnecessary for the vast majority of people, **this is an option that I'd only recommend to a small percentage of the population**.

  This primarily includes people who are very close to reaching their goal level of leanness and only have a small amount of body fat left to lose. This is extra relevant to people like natural bodybuilders and fitness competitors who are attempting to reach very low levels of body fat and are going from lean to extremely lean (which is when the body is fighting back as hard as possible and thus a slow rate of weight loss becomes most beneficial). Secondarily, this option is also ideal for the minority of people who are in no rush to make progress and are willing to accept such a slow rate of weight loss in exchange for how easy it will be to make happen.

OPTION 3: MODERATE

✓ **Pros:**

This is the middle of the previous two extremes, **and it is here that you will get the best of both worlds while greatly lessening (or completely eliminating) many of their potential drawbacks**.

The rate of weight loss, while not the fastest, *is still quite good*. The various problems that come about during fat loss, while not at their least-problematic, *are still considerably minimized*. Basically, you get a combination of what's good about a fast rate of weight loss and what's good about a slow rate of weight loss… *just to a slightly lesser degree* than they would be individually.

✘ **Cons:**

I think that pretty much summed it all up.

- **Most Ideal For: The majority of the population.**

  For most people, this will be their "Goldilocks" option. A rate of weight loss that is not too fast, not too slow, but rather… *just right*. You get most of the beneficial things you want, and limit most of the detrimental things you don't. **Thus, this is the option that I recommend to the majority of the population seeking superior results.**

And this brings us to our next obvious question:

What exactly is a "moderate" rate of weight loss?

Let's find out…

THE IDEAL RATE OF WEIGHT LOSS FOR SUPERIOR FAT LOSS

So, taking all of the following into account…

1. The unrealistic rates of weight loss.
2. The realistic rates of weight loss.
3. The fact that we want to strike the perfect balance between losing fat effectively (and permanently) AND minimizing/avoiding the various problems that hinder our progress along the way (muscle loss, hormonal/metabolic issues, etc.).

What is the ideal rate of weight loss for achieving superior results? This is what I recommend…

THE IDEAL RATE OF WEIGHT LOSS

Lose between 0.3% - 1% of your body weight per week.

This range represents what I (and most others) consider to be a "moderate" rate of weight loss.

However, my version of it differs a bit from the norm in that it's slightly wider on the low end to allow for certain people to use a slower rate of weight loss when going a little slower can be beneficial. This range takes that into account.

But really, the most important thing here is that you end up losing weight at a rate that is somewhere within this range. *That's your goal*.

Doing so is step #1 in producing the superior results we're looking for.

Now, to ensure that this recommendation is as clear as possible (and to assist anyone who maybe didn't thrive in their 3rd grade math class), let me show you some examples of what this would look like in the real world.

Here are a few random body weights and the corresponding ranges for how much weight someone weighing that amount should aim to lose each week. (You'd obviously do the exact same math to calculate the ideal range for whatever amount you happen to weigh.)

Examples

Example Body Weight	Ideal Rate Of Weight Loss
350 lbs	**1 - 3.5 lbs** lost per week.
300 lbs	**0.9 - 3 lbs** lost per week.
250 lbs	**0.75 - 2.5 lbs** lost per week.
200 lbs	**0.6 - 2 lbs** lost per week.
175 lbs	**0.5 - 1.75 lbs** lost per week.
150 lbs	**0.45 - 1.5 lbs** lost per week.
130 lbs	**0.4 - 1.3 lbs** lost per week.

As you can see, since the rate of weight loss is calculated based on a percentage of the person's body weight, the more fat someone has to lose (and the more they therefore weigh), the faster their rate of weight loss ends up being (and vice versa).

This is ideal for many reasons, the most obvious of which is that the more fat you have to lose, the faster you can (and arguably *should*) lose it.

Recommendations that are static (i.e., "everyone should lose X lbs per week") fail to take this into account and instead cause someone who wants to lose 10 lbs and someone who wants to lose 100 lbs to have the same rate of weight loss.

Which is just plain silly.

Another reason why this is ideal is because it naturally builds in a structure where your rate of weight loss happens faster early on when you have the most fat to lose (and your body is fighting back the least due to the abundance of body fat available) and then gradually gets slower as you become leaner, weigh less and have less body fat left to lose (which is when your body is fighting back the most and a slower rate of weight loss will help to mitigate the problems associated with that).

Now let me answer the two questions that have probably popped into your head…

WHERE IN THIS RANGE SHOULD I BE?

Yeah, I know, a range of **0.3% - 1%** is somewhat broad. As you can see on the chart of examples from the previous page, this range can allow a 200 lb person to lose as little as 0.6 lbs per week to as much as 2 lbs per week.

That's a decent sized difference right there, and you'd probably like it better if I narrowed things down a bit. No problem.

First and foremost, like I said a minute ago, **as long as you are somewhere within this range, *you're good***. You're doing it right. You're winning. Superior progress is taking place. That's what's most important here. Falling anywhere inside this range = success.

Having said that, what determines whether you should be in the top, middle or bottom of this range?

Here are the two most important factors worth taking into consideration:

1. The first factor is simply **your own needs and preferences**. If you want to lose a little faster or slower or somewhere in between… *feel free*. Pick the spot within this range that suits you best and is most consistently doable for you. My personal preference (and my most common general recommendation) tends to be something **in the middle of the range**. In my experience, *that's the sweet spot*.

2. The second factor is **your current body fat percentage**. Meaning, someone who is already lean and looking to become *really* lean, or anyone who is close to their goal and/or only has a small amount of fat left to lose will likely do best staying more in the **lower half** of the recommended range. (And yes, that *is* what I'd recommend doing in those cases.)

   On the other hand, people who are fatter and have a much larger amount of weight to lose may (*optionally*) prefer staying more in the **upper half** of the range… at least until they've lost some fat and are a little closer to their goal.

   And people who are somewhere in the middle (or maybe just aren't sure one way or the other) will usually do best somewhere in the **middle** of the range.

Also, keep in mind that you don't have to be at one very specific spot in this range from now until the day you reach your long-term fat loss goal. **This choice isn't set in stone.**

For example, you may choose to lose closer to 0.7-1% of your body weight per week in the early stages when you have a lot more fat to lose. Then, at some point later on when you're maybe midway to reaching your goal, you may prefer to lose something more like 0.5-0.7% of your body weight per week. And then, when you're much leaner, have much less fat left to lose and are close to reaching your goal, you may prefer to lose something like 0.3-0.5% of your body weight per week.

Basically, feel free to adjust the specifics of exactly where you are within this range based on your own needs, preferences and body fat percentage at *any given point* throughout your fat loss phase.

And whenever in doubt, the middle of the range tends to be an ideal starting point.

Got it? Good. Now for that second question…

WHAT IF I'M LOSING WEIGHT SLOWER OR FASTER THAN THIS?

Simple. You adjust your calorie intake (and/or calorie output) accordingly. Don't worry, the next chapter will explain exactly how to do that. Speaking of which…

Let's figure out the calorie intake that will make this ideal rate of weight loss happen.

CHAPTER 7

Calorie Intake: Setting The Deficit

CALORIE INTAKE: SETTING THE DEFICIT

So you now know what your ideal rate of weight loss is. The next logical step is to figure out what your calorie intake needs to be to cause fat loss and actually make this rate of weight loss occur.

Or, to put that another way, it's time to figure out how many calories you need to eat to create your ideal caloric deficit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CALORIES

As we all now know and fully agree with (please, *pretty please*, for the love of all humanity, tell me that we all agree with it?!?), "calories in vs calories out" is THE thing, and a caloric deficit is the sole cause and requirement of losing fat.

In case you forgot (who knows, maybe you suffered a head injury at some point during the previous chapters… I'm not taking any chances here!), let me give you a super quick reminder of what that means.

A **caloric deficit** occurs when you consume less calories than the amount your body needs to maintain its current state.

This "maintenance" amount is aptly referred to as your **maintenance level**, aka the amount of calories you'd need to eat per day for your weight to remain the same.

For a deficit to exist, you'd simply need to consume less calories than whatever your maintenance level is, thus ending up at some degree "below maintenance."

Why do you need to do this? Why must a caloric deficit exist?

Because a caloric deficit forces your body to find some alternative fuel source to burn for energy instead, and that alternative fuel source will be your stored body fat.

Meaning… without a caloric deficit, no amount of fat will ever be lost. It's THE requirement.

Does all of this ring a bell? I certainly hope so. If not, feel free to go back to the beginning of this book and remind yourself (and then maybe get that head injury taken care of).

All good now?

Awesome.

Let's get down to business…

YOUR CALORIE MAINTENANCE LEVEL

The first step in figuring out your ideal calorie intake for fat loss is figuring out your maintenance level. After all, that is the number of calories that you need to be below for your deficit to exist.

So, the question is: **what is your maintenance level?**

As nice as it would be for me to instantly say it's exactly X calories, it's just not possible for me (or anyone else) to actually do that.

This is because each person's maintenance level is based on a variety of factors specific to them, thus making it highly unlikely for anyone to come up with a single perfectly accurate amount.

These factors include:

1. Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR, which includes gender, weight, height, age, etc.)
2. Thermic Effect of Activity (TEA)
3. Thermic Effect of Food (TEF)
4. Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT)
5. Various Adaptive Hormonal/Metabolic Factors

And all of this stuff varies from one person to the next. Hell, you could even take 10 people of the same gender, height, weight, age and activity level and still end up with 10 different maintenance levels.

For this reason, the best we can really do here is come up with an ***estimated* maintenance level**. Which, as you'll soon find out, is all we truly need.

To do this, there are dozens of different methods, equations and formulas to use, some of which are more or less complicated than others and often more or less accurate as well.

Here are my three favorites…

METHOD #1: BODY WEIGHT (LBS) X 13-17

This tends to be the quickest and easiest method of all. Just take your *current* body weight in pounds and multiply it by 13 and 17. Many people will find that their maintenance level falls somewhere in between those two amounts.

For example, a 200 lb person would do 200 x 13 and 200 x 17 and get an estimated daily calorie maintenance level of somewhere between 2600-3400 calories.

Those who are female, or older, or less active, or feel they have a "slow metabolism" should usually stick more toward the lower half of their estimate. Those who are male, or younger, or more active, or feel they have a "fast metabolism" should usually stick more toward the upper half of their estimate.

If you're unsure, just pick a number somewhere in the middle.

METHOD #2: THE MIFFLIN-ST JEOR CALCULATOR

While Method #1 is often accurate for many people, it still has the potential to be off to some degree because it doesn't account for many of those factors I mentioned before (like age, gender and activity level).

And that's where the **Mifflin-St Jeor** equation comes into play.

The Mifflin-St Jeor equation is one of a handful of slightly complex and widely accepted formulas used for estimating a person's maintenance level based on many of the factors I mentioned above, thereby increasing the potential for accuracy.

Rather than make you do any more math (math sucks, I know), I've created a handy calculator that will do it all for you. Just fill it in and click the "Calculate!" button.

It's here: The Calorie Maintenance Level Calculator

The number given is your estimated daily maintenance level.

METHOD #3: THE EXPERIMENT

While one (or both) of the previous two methods will usually provide you with the close-enough estimate you need, it's important to remember that they are still just *estimates*.

The only way to truly find your EXACT calorie maintenance level is by doing a simple commonsense experiment…

1. Consistently eat the way you currently do (meaning, don't change anything… eat the same foods/amounts you normally eat) for the next 2 weeks while accurately tracking how many calories you are eating each day (and keeping your activity level about the same as well). In addition, weigh yourself each morning of those 2 weeks.

2. At the end of those 2 weeks, figure out what your average ***daily*** calorie intake was and what your average ***weekly*** body weight was. For the math-challenged, this would mean adding up the 14 days of daily calorie intakes and dividing the total by 14. That's your average daily calorie intake. For your body weight, you'd do the same with the first week's worth of daily body weight (add up the first 7 days and divide the total by 7) and then repeat this with the second week of body weight. You'll now have your average body weight for week 1 and your average body weight for week 2, thus allowing you to see how your body weight changed (if at all) during this 2-week experiment. You'll also know how many calories you were eating each day on average to make that change (or lack of change) happen.

3. If your average weight stayed *about* the same from week 1 to week 2, chances are your average daily calorie intake during that time was pretty close to what your maintenance level is (or, at the very least, it's a pretty good estimated starting point). If, however, your weight went up or down by some meaningful amount, you'd then adjust your calorie intake in small increments, wait another couple of weeks, and see what your weight does then.

4. When you reach a point where your average weekly body weight is consistently staying about the same, you'll know for sure that you've found your maintenance level.

Yeah, *I know*.

That seems like a whole lot of work and I doubt there's anyone reading this right now who's thinking "wow, I'm soooo looking forward to doing this fun experiment!"

So, while it is the most accurate method and it would be lovely if everyone took the time to do it (and actually did it accurately), **the reality is that you probably don't need to do it**.

There are two reasons why.

The first is because Method #1 and/or Method #2 will honestly be good enough at this point. (By the way, if you decide to use both of those methods and get estimates that are a bit apart from each other, feel free to simply select a number somewhere in the middle of the two.)

The second reason is because this "experiment" I just described will magically end up taking place anyway, thus ensuring that your calorie intake ends up being exactly what it needs to be (even if your maintenance estimate is slightly off right now).

Don't worry, you'll see why later in this chapter.

All that's important right now is that you have some kind of estimated maintenance level in mind… which you do.

Awesome!

Now let's create the deficit.

CREATING THE DEFICIT

Now that you've estimated your maintenance level, it's time for the next important step… creating your required deficit.

The only question is: **exactly what size should your deficit be?**

Well, as fate would have it, there are once again three options for us to choose from…

1. **Small Deficit**
   This is typically defined as being between **5-15% below your maintenance level**.
   So, for example, a person who has a maintenance level of 2500 calories would create a deficit of somewhere between 125-375 calories per day. In this example, that would mean eating between 2125-2375 calories per day.

2. **Medium Deficit**
   This is typically defined as being between **15-25% below your maintenance level**.
   So, for example, a person who has a maintenance level of 2500 calories would create a deficit of somewhere between 375-625 calories per day. In this example, that would mean eating between 1875-2125 calories per day.

3. **Large Deficit**
   This is typically defined as being between **25-35% below your maintenance level**.
   So, for example, a person who has a maintenance level of 2500 calories would create a deficit of somewhere between 625-875 calories per day. In this example, that would mean eating between 1625-1875 calories per day.

As you already know, the size of the deficit goes hand-in-hand with both the rate of weight loss produced and how hard the body will fight back against it.

Which means…

All of the pros and cons we went through earlier apply here just the same.

Which means…

The larger the deficit, the faster weight loss will happen but the more your body will fight back against it. The smaller the deficit, the slower weight loss will happen but the less your body will fight back against it.

Which means…

The **large deficit** defined above will *usually* produce that **(realistically) fast rate of weight loss** which most of us should avoid. Why? Because it causes that very long list of potential problems to be at their worst.

The **small deficit** defined above will *usually* produce that **slow rate of weight loss** that I explained is most ideal for a small percentage of the population (namely, people going from lean to very lean, those who are close to their goal and don't have much fat left to lose, and people who are simply in no rush to make progress and are willing to accept such a slow rate of it).

And the **medium deficit** defined above? That will *usually* produce the **moderate rate of weight loss** that will be ideal for the vast majority of the population seeking superior fat loss results.

So, with all of that in mind, what should your caloric deficit be?

THE IDEAL CALORIC DEFICIT

Between 10-25% below your maintenance level.

This is the deficit size that I recommend.

It is essentially the entire "medium" deficit range with a slightly wider lower end to accommodate that previously mentioned minority of people who would benefit from a slower rate of weight loss.

To ensure that this recommendation is as clear as possible, let me show you some examples of what this would look like in the real world.

Here are a few random maintenance levels and the corresponding ranges for how much of a deficit someone with that maintenance level should aim to create.

(You'd obviously do the exact same math to calculate the ideal deficit range for whatever your maintenance level happens to be.)

Examples

Example Maintenance Level	Ideal Daily Caloric Deficit
4000	**400 - 1000** calories below maintenance level.
3500	**350 - 875** calories below maintenance level.
3000	**300 - 750** calories below maintenance level.
2500	**250 - 625** calories below maintenance level.
2000	**200 - 500** calories below maintenance level.
1800	**180 - 450** calories below maintenance level.
1600	**160 - 400** calories below maintenance level.

As you can see, just like before, since the deficit is being calculated based on a percentage of the person's maintenance level, the more fat someone has to lose (and the higher their maintenance level will therefore be), the larger their deficit and rate of weight loss ends up being as well (and vice versa).

Also just like before, this naturally builds in a structure where your deficit is larger when your maintenance level is higher and you have the most fat to lose (and your body is fighting back the

least due to the abundance of body fat available), and then gradually gets smaller as you become leaner, weigh less and your maintenance level decreases (which is when your body is fighting back a lot harder and a smaller deficit will help to mitigate the problems associated with that).

Now let's answer that same question from before…

WHERE IN THIS RANGE SHOULD I BE?

Just like earlier… *anywhere within this range is fine*.

Once again, let your personal needs and preferences, along with your body fat percentage, dictate exactly where within this range you choose to be.

Also just like before, my preferences usually lean toward something near the middle. So, an even **20% below maintenance** tends to be my general recommendation for *most* people, *most* of the time.

It's often a perfectly fine **deficit starting point**.

Wait…

What's that you say?

"Deficit starting point? What the hell do you mean by *starting point*?"

Well… see… the thing is… there's one teeny-tiny problem with ALL deficit recommendations.

THE PROBLEM WITH DEFICIT RECOMMENDATIONS

If you asked me what the perfect caloric deficit is, the best answer I could give you is this…

The perfect deficit is whatever amount of calories is needed to cause your ideal rate of weight loss to take place.

That's it.

That's the perfect deficit. That's the perfect calorie intake. That's the perfect amount of calories for striking the ideal balance between losing fat at an acceptable rate and minimizing/preventing all of the problems (muscle loss, metabolic slowdown, hormonal issues, hunger, mood, libido, etc.) that come along with it.

Basically, that is the deficit that will make superior fat loss happen.

The problem, however, is that we can't know in advance exactly what that deficit will be for each person.

Yes, the recommendation I just gave you (10-25% below maintenance) is, based on research and experience, the recommendation that is most likely to come the closest to being that amount.

BUT, it's still only an *estimated starting point* rather than "the perfect deficit that is guaranteed to cause your ideal rate of weight loss to occur."

Why, you ask? **Why can't I give you a *guaranteed-exactly-perfect* deficit amount?**

Because, no matter what deficit I recommend, internal factors are going to disrupt it to some degree. And that degree can vary quite a bit from person to person.

Let me explain…

MEET THE DEFICIT DISRUPTERS

The biggest disrupter of all is **NEAT**.

You might remember NEAT (non-exercise activity thermogenesis) from earlier parts of this book. It was one of the things that I mentioned that decreases when you're in a deficit due to your body fighting back against your attempt to lose fat. It was also on my list of factors that influence what your maintenance level is.

Turns out it's also a hugely significant factor influencing what a person's deficit needs to be.

Here's why.

NEAT, as I mentioned earlier, is defined as the calories burned as a result of all of the little things you do over the course of the day *BESIDES* exercise.

I'm talking about things like standing, brushing your teeth, getting dressed, typing, shopping, walking from your car to your house, etc.

But wait, there's more! NEAT also includes all of your **spontaneous** daily activity as well.

You know, like moving around in your chair, tapping your foot, adjusting/maintaining posture and position, fidgeting… basically any movement that you didn't consciously make yourself do. This also includes the movement taking place while you sleep.

The most interesting thing about NEAT is that **it increases with overfeeding and decreases with underfeeding**. Why? Because your body hates change and is always trying to maintain homeostasis.

So, when you consume more calories than your body needs and a surplus exists, NEAT upregulates and your body naturally burns more calories without you even realizing it. **So the more calories you consume, the more calories your body naturally burns thanks to NEAT.**

On the other hand, when you consume fewer calories than your body needs and a deficit exists, NEAT downregulates and your body naturally burns less calories without you even realizing it. **So the fewer calories you consume, the fewer calories your body naturally burns thanks to NEAT.**

This, of course, is all part of your body's adaptive survival response. It thinks you might be starving to death, so it makes you burn less calories to conserve energy… thus contributing to the issue of metabolic slowdown.

Now here's where it gets REALLY interesting.

Studies show that the variance between the amount of calories burned via NEAT from one person to the next is sometimes pretty damn crazy.

For example, in a surplus, some people don't upregulate NEAT at all. So, when they overeat, they don't burn *any* additional calories. But for others, overeating causes their body to burn *hundreds* of additional calories. Others fall somewhere in the middle.

So let's put that into a completely made up example.

Let's say three people have a daily maintenance level of 2500 calories. Starting tomorrow, they all begin overeating and consume 500 excess calories each day (so 3000 total).

Here's what can potentially happen:

1. **Person A** may burn no additional calories whatsoever. In their case, they ate 500 more calories and have a full 500 calorie surplus as a result (so they're eating 3000 calories).

2. **Person B** may burn 100 additional calories via NEAT. In their case, they end up with only a 400 calorie surplus (as if they're only eating 2900 calories).

3. **Person C** may burn 300 additional calories via NEAT. In their case, they end up with only a 200 calorie surplus (as if they're only eating 2700 calories).

So, in this example, we have three people with the same maintenance levels overeating the same amount of calories and creating an identical surplus. **But, the amount of fat they will each gain will be quite different due to how their body responds to the extra calories they consume.**

You can see why Person A is going to be much more genetically prone to gaining fat and having a harder time losing it than the other two people.

Person C, however, is likely genetically prone to being skinny and being the kind of person who seems like they can "eat as much as they want without gaining fat." That's not actually true, of course. It's just that Person C's body is super-efficient at burning calories (due to NEAT) to the point where it cancels out more than half of the extra calories they consume.

This is why different people who are overeating enough to be in a surplus are capable of gaining very different amounts of body fat… even when they are all consuming the same amount of calories.

But wait… there's even more!

The same type of thing happens in reverse when a deficit is created.

Meaning, even if different people of the same gender, age, height and weight had the same maintenance level and created the same sized *seemingly perfect* deficit, NEAT will *downregulate* to varying degrees.

All to the point where the same deficit that causes one person to lose weight at their ideal rate might cause another to lose half that much and another to lose even less than that.

Which means – *for this reason alone* – some people will require a larger deficit than others to make the same ideal rate of weight loss happen.

Behold the power of NEAT.

Now, besides NEAT, there are a handful of other internal metabolic and hormonal factors at play that can also disrupt your intended deficit.

This includes various overlapping elements like **adaptive thermogenesis**, **a drop in thyroid**, **a drop in leptin**, **an increase in lethargy** and so on… all of which affect how many calories your body is burning and, consequently, how many calories you'll need to eat for a deficit to exist.

You might recall that all of these internal factors (including NEAT) were on our big list from earlier of the many ways the human body fights back to prevent us from losing fat… thus making things hard and sucky.

Well, here's an example of it in action… **disrupting the deficit we are trying to create**. And doing so to differing degrees from one person to the next.

OKAY, SO WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN?

It means two things…

1. First, every deficit recommendation in the world can only be an *estimated starting point* rather than the deficit that is guaranteed to make a person's ideal rate of weight loss take place. Granted, my recommendation is going to be extremely close for most people and, for many, may even be perfect. But, for others, these internal factors can disrupt that deficit enough to prevent it from causing the rate of weight loss it should be causing.

2. Second, when you combine this with the fact that the maintenance level we are basing our deficit calculation off of in the first place is also just an estimate, you quickly realize that all we really have here is one estimate built from another estimate giving us nothing more than **one big estimated calorie intake starting point**. Nothing more, nothing less.

ALRIGHT, AND WHAT DOES ALL OF THAT MEAN?

It means this…

1. For many of the people who estimate their maintenance level using my recommended methods and then create their deficit using something in the middle of the ideal range I recommended (e.g., 20% below maintenance), **they WILL indeed end up losing weight at their ideal rate**. Hooray! Your maintenance level estimate was accurate (as it will be for many people), and your intended deficit was not disrupted to any meaningful degree. Awesome!

2. In other cases, the maintenance level estimate you came up with might be a bit too high or a bit too low. Or, your deficit might be disrupted more than we thought it would. Or, there could

be a combination of both. **Which means, you may need to eat slightly more or less calories to make your ideal rate of weight loss happen.**

For example, some might find that they need to create a deficit that is a bit more toward the higher end of the recommended range in order for their ideal rate of weight loss to occur.

Others may find that they need to go down toward the lower end of the recommended range for their ideal rate of weight loss to occur.

And others may even need to stray slightly outside of the recommended range altogether for their recommended rate of weight loss to occur.

SO WHAT THE HELL DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN?

It means that the most important step in figuring out how many calories you need to eat per day for your ideal deficit to exist and your ideal rate of weight loss to take place is something I like to refer to as… "**The Key Step**."

Let me show you what it is and how it will work.

It's quite easy.

THE KEY STEP

At this point, you have an estimated maintenance level and an estimated caloric deficit starting point. You also know what your ideal rate of weight loss should be.

That last part is crucial, because the ultimate way of figuring out what your calorie intake needs to be is by using your rate of weight loss as the map that guides you there.

Meaning, when you're losing weight at your ideal rate, you'll know that your calorie intake is perfect. When you aren't, you'll know that it needs to be adjusted.

Here's how to do it…

EAT, TRACK AND (IF NEEDED) ADJUST ACCORDINGLY

1. First, take your estimated maintenance level and subtract your ideal deficit from it.
2. Then, consistently consume this amount of calories each day for the next *2-4 weeks* while closely tracking what your body weight does.

After those 2-4 weeks, I want you to answer the following questions:

- **Are you losing weight at your ideal rate?**
  If so, congrats. Your calorie intake (and deficit size) is exactly what it needs to be. Continue eating this number of calories.

- **Are you not losing any weight at all? Or possibly even gaining weight?**
  If so, it means there is no deficit present. Which means that your calorie intake is too high and needs to be decreased by some small increment. In most cases, **subtracting an additional 10-20%** from your current calorie intake will be ideal. After making this adjustment, consistently consume this new amount of calories each day and monitor your weight over the next 2-4 weeks. Are you still not losing any weight? Repeat this step again until you are.

- **Are you losing weight, but a bit slower than your ideal rate?**
  If so, it means a deficit exists but is slightly smaller than it should be. Which means that your calorie intake needs to be decreased by some small increment. In most cases, **subtracting an additional 5-10%** from your current calorie intake will be ideal. After making this adjustment, consistently consume this new amount of calories each day and monitor your weight over the

next 2-4 weeks. Is your rate of weight loss still slower than it ideally should be? Repeat this step again until that's resolved.

- **Are you losing weight, but a bit faster than your ideal rate?**
  If so, it means a deficit exists but is slightly larger than it should be. Which means that your calorie intake needs to be increased by some small increment. In most cases, **adding an additional 5-10%** to your current calorie intake will be ideal. After making this adjustment, consistently consume this new amount of calories each day and monitor your weight over the next 2-4 weeks. Is your rate of weight loss still faster than it ideally should be? Repeat this step again until that's resolved.

Basically, weigh yourself correctly (details below) and keep track of it somewhere.

If you are losing weight at your ideal rate, you're perfect. If you aren't, then just adjust your calorie intake up or down in small increments, give it another 2-4 weeks and track what happens.

Are you losing at your ideal rate now? If so, awesome! If not, keep adjusting until you are.

All of the maintenance level estimates, calculators and deficit recommendations in the world are lovely and wonderful, ***BUT THIS IS THE KEY STEP*** to guaranteeing that your calorie intake is exactly what it should be for superior fat loss.

And yeah, that's right… I just used bold, underline, italic, all-caps and increased the font size for added emphasis there. *That's* how important this step is.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *When you decrease your calorie intake to create a deficit for the first time, it's extremely common to see more weight loss occur during the first week or two than you'll see over the ensuing weeks. This is perfectly normal and nothing to worry about. In addition to body fat being lost, a decent amount of water weight and glycogen tend to be lost during this initial period as well. This is why I always recommend giving it* ***2-4 weeks*** *of consistently eating a certain amount and tracking what happens before making any adjustments. This gives your weight enough time to stabilize, which allows you to see the true rate of fat loss that's taking place.*

Now let's ensure you're weighing yourself properly…

WEIGHING IN:
HOW TO ACCURATELY TRACK YOUR BODY WEIGHT

One thing you definitely want to avoid doing is making unnecessary adjustments to your calorie intake as a result of improperly weighing yourself and/or improperly tracking your weight.

Another thing you want to avoid doing is stressing out, obsessing over and/or worrying about completely meaningless temporary changes to your body weight.

To successfully avoid both of these problems and ensure you're doing things as accurately as possible, here's what I recommend…

STEP 1: WEIGH YOURSELF EVERY SINGLE DAY

Weigh yourself every day of the week using a digital scale (any of these would be fine), and always do it first thing in the morning on an empty stomach before eating or drinking anything. You should pee first, though.

Try to wear as little clothing as possible when you do it (being naked would be ideal). If you must wear something, at least try to wear the same amount of clothing each time.

STEP 2: IGNORE YOUR DAILY WEIGHT

This part is key. Ignore the completely normal day-to-day fluctuations in your body weight. This shit is completely meaningless to us, and, ironically, it may *literally* be shit.

You see, changes in body weight happen all the time as a result of everything from a loss or gain of fat, muscle, water, glycogen, poop, food intake and more. And these changes (specifically due to water) happen more often and to a more significant degree with women thanks to their menstrual cycle.

In the short-term – meaning the changes you see from one day to the next – it's almost always just water, glycogen, poop and/or food intake causing it to happen, *and we don't care about any of those things*. Which is why we don't care about any of the completely normal daily changes they may cause to our body weight.

For this reason, what our weight does from one day to the next isn't something to pay any attention to at all. Track it, but ignore it. It means nothing.

STEP 3: AT THE END OF THE WEEK, TAKE THE AVERAGE

This is the only number we really care about.

Your average weight for the week is the number you will base all of your decisions on in terms of whether or not your calorie intake needs to be adjusted.

Doing things this way reduces the potential for those normal daily weight fluctuations caused by meaningless things to throw off our tracking.

(For the math-challenged, at the end of the week, take all 7 days of weigh-ins and add them together. Then, divide the total by 7. The number you get is your average weight for the week. To make it easier, you can use some kind of weight tracking app or a fancy spreadsheet that will do this for you.)

STEP 4: ALWAYS COMPARE 2-4 WEEKS OF WEEKLY AVERAGES

Before you ever even consider making any changes to your calorie intake, wait until you have *at least* 2-4 weeks of consistent weekly averages to look at and compare.

Just like how taking the weekly average is more accurate than watching our day-to-day weight, being able to see 2-4 weeks' worth of weekly averages will give us the best and most accurate big picture of what our body weight is legitimately doing.

THE ONE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION

What I just outlined is by far the best way of weighing yourself and accurately tracking that weight. It is what I personally do and recommend to every single person trying to lose fat.

With one possible exception.

And that exception would be people who are unable to properly follow the above steps, specifically the part about weighing yourself daily, focusing *only* on the weekly averages **AND NOT letting the day-to-day changes negatively affect you**.

For whatever reason (often a history of disordered eating and/or body image issues are involved), weighing in daily and seeing these normal meaningless changes will cause some people to feel anything from panic, to depression, to whatever combination of feelings are needed to end up causing more harm than good.

In these rare cases, I'd suggest weighing in weekly instead of daily. In really extreme cases, weighing in monthly may even be needed. Additional details here: How Often To Weigh-In

But everyone else? As in, the majority of the population? Following the steps outlined above is *definitely* the way you should do it.

SECONDARY METHODS FOR TRACKING PROGRESS

Tracking your body weight in the manner I just described will be the primary method of monitoring your progress. Secondarily, though, I'd also recommend the following…

1. **Take Measurements**
   I recommend getting a tape measure (any of these will be good) and taking regular measurements every 1-2 weeks and keeping a log of it. Measure your stomach/waist, arms/biceps, hips, thighs, calves, chest, whatever. The exact spot you take each measurement from doesn't matter as much as ensuring you take it from the same spot each time.

2. **Take Pictures**
   Another thing you're definitely going to want to do is take pictures once or twice a month. Mirrors suck for tracking progress, because you see yourself every single day (which makes it tough to notice the differences), plus the fact that your mind is capable of playing all kinds of tricks on you in terms of what you're seeing, plus the fact that normal daily fluctuations in body weight will only further skew that perception even more. That's where pictures help out big time. Nothing is better for showing you exactly what type of visual changes your body is making (and just how noticeable those changes truly are) quite like a side-by-side comparison of pictures. Try to take them in the same room, in the same spot, with similar lighting and in a similar pose to keep things as consistent as possible. A front, back and side shot is a good starting point, but you can of course take more in whatever poses you want. I'd also recommend taking some of them relaxed and some of them flexed if you can.

WHAT NEXT?

Your calorie intake – the most important part of your diet and the pivotal factor in actually making fat loss happen – has now been designed for superior results.

What comes next? That's easy.

We're going to do the exact same thing for the nutrients that will be providing those calories…

CHAPTER 8

Macronutrient Intake: Protein, Fat And Carbs

MACRONUTRIENT INTAKE: PROTEIN, FAT AND CARBS

Have you figured out the amount of **calories** that you should eat each day for your ideal caloric deficit to exist, which will then cause your ideal rate of weight loss to take place?

Check!

Have you figured out the ideal amounts of each **macronutrient** that you should eat each day to make your entire diet as beneficial as possible to your overall health and your ability to successfully lose fat, maintain muscle while losing that fat, and prevent/minimize many of those "body-fighting-back" problems we want to prevent/minimize?

Unchecked.

Let's fix that, shall we?

WHAT ARE MACRONUTRIENTS?

Macronutrients (aka "macros" aka the most annoying abbreviation of all time) are the nutrients that provide the calories in the foods we eat. There are four of them, although it's the first three that will be getting the majority of our attention:

1. **Protein.** (1 gram = 4 calories)
2. **Fat.** (1 gram = 9 calories)
3. **Carbs.** (1 gram = 4 calories)
4. **Alcohol.** (1 gram = 7 calories)

So when you look at the nutritional information of a food and see the amount listed for "Calories," that amount is the total combined calories from the protein, fat and carbs (and alcohol) in that serving of that food.

We'll ignore alcohol for now because it's not really relevant (although I will cover it later). **These other three macronutrients, on the other hand, will play important roles in your fat loss results.**

Let's take a look at what those important roles are and determine exactly how much of each you should consume on a daily basis to best fulfill those roles.

Let's also go in order of importance, which of course means we'll be starting with protein.

PROTEIN

If you asked the average person who knows nothing about nutrition to tell you what they know about **protein**, chances are they'll tell you that it's a "good thing" that they should "probably try to eat more of" and will likely associate with being the cliché-as-hell "building block of muscle."

And they'd be right.

Although, technically speaking, it's actually the building block of damn near everything.

WHAT DOES PROTEIN DO AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Your muscles, organs, skin, hair, nails, bones, certain hormones and much more are all made up of some amount of protein. It's responsible for the **growth and repair** of all of the cells and tissues in your body. Protein is also the provider of our **essential amino acids** ("essential" in this context meaning your body requires them but cannot produce them on its own… they must be supplied through your diet).

For these reasons, a sufficient protein intake is an absolute requirement for sustaining life and proper function. Without enough of it, you'll die.

Yeah, I know… blah blah blah life and death blah blah blah. How does it affect fat loss?

Good question.

WHAT ROLES DOES PROTEIN PLAY DURING FAT LOSS?

In addition to all of the above, protein will play three very important roles in our ability to successfully lose fat. They are:

1. **Maintaining muscle.**
   There's a reason protein is referred to as the "building block of muscle" in everything ever written about it. And that reason is… *it's true*. Along with things like water and glycogen, protein is literally a part of what your muscles are made up of. **Without a sufficient amount of it, muscle cannot be built, maintained or repaired.**

   Why does this matter to us? Because, as I explained earlier, body fat is not the only fuel source your body can burn for energy when you're in a caloric deficit. *Muscle tissue can be*

burned as well. And, as I also explained earlier, losing muscle while losing fat is not only a very legitimate problem, it's also an extremely common one. Fortunately, there are ways to prevent it. As it turns out, **consuming a sufficient amount of protein each day is the single most important dietary factor for preventing muscle loss while in a deficit**. Study after study after study after study after study after study consistently supports this importance. So, if you want to significantly improve your calorie partitioning and avoid losing muscle while losing fat… eating enough protein is an absolute requirement.

2. **Controlling hunger and appetite.**

Remember earlier when I described all of the things that make losing fat so hard and sucky? Do you remember **increased hunger and appetite** being on that list? Hell, even if you don't remember seeing it there (that darn head injury strikes again!), you most likely remember experiencing it firsthand every single time you've ever made any attempt to lose fat. Leptin goes down, ghrelin goes up, our attention to food goes through the roof and *we get hungry*. Not just "normal hungry," but rather the type of "hungry" that causes people to overeat, cancel out their intended deficit and/or stray from their diet and/or give up altogether, and fail to reach their fat loss goals. Or, *best case scenario*, the kind of "hungry" that causes people who are successfully losing fat to suffer through every single day of that successful fat loss period.

What can we do about this, you ask? Well, as it turns out, **protein plays a HUGE role in satiation**. In fact, **compared to carbs and fat, protein is by far and away the most filling macronutrient of them all**. This makes it a HUGE dietary factor in controlling your hunger, curbing your appetite and keeping you full/satisfied, thereby improving your ability to sustain your deficit, lose fat, and keep it off long-term. Study after study after study after study after study after study after study consistently supports this.

3. **Increasing your metabolic rate.**

The faster your metabolic rate is… the more calories your body naturally burns each day. And the more calories your body naturally burns each day… the higher your maintenance level is. And the higher your maintenance level is… the higher your calorie intake will be after you've created a deficit. And the higher your calorie intake is after a deficit has been created… the more food you get to eat while losing fat. And the more food you get to eat while losing fat… *the happier you'll be*.

The reason I bring this up is because even though protein, fat and carbs all have some degree of thermic effect, **protein has the largest thermic effect of them all**. This means it will cause the Thermic Effect of Food (TEF) to increase the most, which again is defined as the calories

your body burns during the digestion and absorption process of the foods you eat. The higher your TEF is, the more calories your body naturally burns each day. With carbs, TEF is usually about 5-10%. With fat, about 0-3%. **But with protein, TEF is 20-30%.** Which means, if you eat a high protein food (e.g., chicken breast), 20-30% of the protein calories it contains will be burned during the digestion process. So if a food contains 100 calories primarily from protein, 20-30 of those calories will be burned when your body processes it. With fat or carbs, you would likely only burn 0-10 calories. Not bad, huh?

Granted, the thermic effect of protein in and of itself is unlikely to be enough to make HUGE improvements to your fat loss progress. However, eating a sufficient amount of protein each day has consistently been shown to improve fat loss progress to some extent as seen in study after study after study after study. And we'll take every improvement we can get.

So, in addition to being a requirement for sustaining life and proper function, consuming a sufficient amount of protein each day will also be the key dietary factor in controlling your hunger and appetite, increasing your Thermic Effect of Food, and ensuring the "weight" you're losing is body fat rather than muscle.

And that brings us to our next obvious question: **what exactly is the "sufficient amount of protein" for maximizing these benefits?**

HOW MUCH PROTEIN SHOULD WE EAT?

Well, depending on who you ask, you'll get a variety of answers ranging from as low as 0.36 g of protein per pound of body weight up to as high as 2 g of protein per pound of body weight.

Pretty broad range, don't you think?

For example, if you ask the USDA, they'll tell you **0.8 g per kg of body weight** (which is about 0.36 g per pound) is the ideal protein intake.

So for someone 200 lbs, you're looking at about 72 g of protein per day.

But the problem with "official" recommendations like this is that they are aimed at basically being the *bare minimum* amount needed for the average *sedentary* adult to continue to function and sustain life.

And that does not describe us at all. We are something very different.

We are healthy, active (or at least, about to become active) adults eating at a deficit for the purpose of losing fat and reaching a level somewhere between "lean" and "really lean." We are (or at least, will be) training our asses off for the purpose of increasing muscle mass and/or maintaining the muscle mass we already have. We are people who are preparing for all of the ways our body is going to fight back against our attempt to reach these goals, and we want to make every strategic adjustment possible to minimize them.

Which is to say… people like "us" have very different needs than people like "them."

And that's something that damn near everyone in the diet and fitness world will agree on. Recommendations like this are just **completely irrelevant to people like us**. We clearly need and benefit from more protein than this.

Exactly how much more protein do we need? That's the part that people can't seem to agree on but love to argue about.

Let's try to make some sense of it all.

MORE PROTEIN = BETTER RESULTS?

Knowing that we have higher protein needs than the kind of people the USDA's recommendations are designed for (hell, even those people should eat more protein than that), the assumption most people tend to make is that we don't just need more protein, we need A LOT more protein.

Add in the insane popularity of protein supplements (which are often viewed as "must haves"), the popularity of high protein diets (and the fact that no "low protein diet" fad has ever really caught on), the recommendations of steroid-using bodybuilders (and the magazines/websites/supplement companies that promote them), and the legitimate fact that protein plays many crucial roles in our results, and we end up coming to one seemingly obvious conclusion:

The more protein we eat, the better our results will be.

But is this conclusion actually correct?

In a way, yes… it definitely is. But in another way, it's also quite incorrect.

Let me explain.

It's true in that eating more protein to the point where your protein intake goes from insufficient levels up to sufficient levels will lead to better results. Less muscle (and more body fat) will be lost, you'll be less hungry, and your TEF will be higher. The closer and closer you get to "sufficient," the better and better this will all be.

However, once you're at this sufficient level, *that's it*. You've hit the upper limit of protein's effectiveness in terms of maximizing these benefits.

So, if X grams of protein is the sufficient amount that maximizes these benefits, eating more than X grams won't magically lead to better results. All it will really end up doing is taking away from the amount of carbs and/or fat you can eat, potentially leading to suboptimal intakes of both.

With this in mind, it's safe to say we can also eliminate the other end of the spectrum of protein recommendations: **the stupidly high end**.

This would be the kind of stuff you really only hear from clueless steroid-using bodybuilders, the equally clueless people who have been unfortunate enough to take their advice, and the various supplement companies who benefit from you consuming as much protein as possible because (surprise!!) they happen to sell protein powder.

I'm talking about crazy high recommendations in the realm of *1.5-2 g of protein per pound of body weight*. Sometimes more.

So for someone 200 lbs, you're looking at 300-400 g (or more) of protein per day. HA!

That is just laughably unnecessary. Ignore it.

THE PROTEIN INTAKE SWEET SPOT

So at this point we know the low end of the protein recommendations we see are irrelevant to people with our needs and goals.

We also know the high end of the recommendations we see are just unnecessarily high and will not produce any "better" results than a saner yet still sufficient protein intake would, despite what various crazy people might claim.

Which means, as usual, the sweet spot lies somewhere in the middle.

I'd define this sweet spot as being: **0.8-1.5 g of protein per pound of body weight**.

Based on all of the research I've seen, my own firsthand experience, and the various recommendations out there from the people whose opinions I value most, this is the ideal protein intake range for superior fat loss.

Now, I know what you might be thinking. This range is still pretty damn broad.

Is there one specific point in this range that's best? Good question.

In recent years, it seems like recommendations for the lower end – specifically *0.8 g per pound* (or its unnecessarily precise cousin, 0.82 g per pound) – have grown slightly in popularity thanks mostly to people like Menno Henselmans. From what I've seen, people have done just fine consuming that amount of protein. Myself included.

Then there are guys like Lyle McDonald (who literally wrote the book on protein: *The Protein Book*) and Eric Helms (who's done quite of bit of work in this area himself), both of whom came to conclusions in their research and with their clients for something more in the *mid/upper end of that range*. From what I've seen, people have done just fine consuming that amount of protein as well. Myself included.

Then you have the recommendation that has existed in the bodybuilding world for decades and will likely still be here decades from now. The good old "1 gram per pound" recommendation, which is probably the most common recommendation of all.

So, you can see here how a range as broad as 0.8-1.5 g per pound can come to exist as the sweet spot.

Depending on different people's personal experience and interpretation of the available research, there seems to be some degree of support for a protein intake anywhere within this range.

The most entertaining thing about this for me is that most people focus only on the differences in the various recommendations they see from the people they follow, while ignoring that A) these differences are actually quite small in the grand scheme of things, and B) virtually everyone agrees that the sweet spot is somewhere within this range.

But hey, enough about everyone else. This is my book. Let me tell you what I think.

Here are my protein intake recommendations…

THE IDEAL PROTEIN INTAKE

- **0.8-1 g of protein per pound of your current body weight.**
  This is what I consider to be the low end of the ideal protein intake range for fat loss. I do not recommend anything lower than this. 0.8 g is the *minimum* amount to aim for each day for maximizing the benefits discussed above. This range is especially ideal for people who have trouble eating enough protein and find higher protein recommendations to be impossible to meet and/or just can't stand the thought of having to eat an amount of protein higher than this each day (and trying to force yourself to do it drives you insane and can potentially cause issues with diet adherence). In these cases, this is the ideal protein intake range for you. So, for example, if you weigh 200 lbs, you'd eat between 160-200 g of protein per day.

- **1-1.3 g of protein per pound of your current body weight.**
  With all else being equal (diet adherence, sustainability, personal preferences, etc.), this is my preferred protein intake range for fat loss, especially for people looking to go from lean to *really lean*. It's the upper end of what's ideal for maximizing the benefits we want *without* being so high that it forces our carb and/or fat intake to be reduced to suboptimal levels. So, for example, if you weigh 200 lbs, you'd eat between 200-260 g of protein per day.

Now let me answer the question that probably just popped into your head.

If something as low as 0.8 g/lb may very well be sufficient, why do I slightly prefer 1-1.3 g/lb?

Well, it's partly because of my own interpretation of the available research and my own firsthand experience and observation. But it's mostly because, when it comes to protein, I agree with the line of thinking of Lyle, Eric and (another very smart/well respected guy in the nutrition field) Alan Aragon… **which is that it's better to end up eating a bit too much rather than a bit too little**.

Why? Three reasons:

1. **Insurance**
   Because if you shoot a little higher and fall a little short, you still end up consuming a sufficient amount of protein. For example, if you shoot for 1-1.3 g per pound and fail to get there, you might end up somewhere between 0.8-1 g per pound instead, which is still in the

range of sufficient. But, if you shoot for 0.8 g per pound and fall a little short, you'll end up below the range altogether.

2. **Uncertainty**

Because we just don't know exactly what amount of protein is best. Yeah, we kinda know enough to form this sweet spot range. And sure, this range is most likely where that exact "best" amount lies. But, we just don't know exactly where in this range it is. Which means, for all we know, slightly more protein *may* provide some benefit over slightly less protein within the context of this range.

Regardless of what anyone tells you, shows you and claims to be true, there is nobody on the planet who knows for sure. No one (including me) can say with absolute certainty EXACTLY how much protein is ideal during fat loss for the purpose of preventing muscle loss, controlling hunger and maximizing TEF. All we can do is guess based on whatever inconclusive evidence is available and whatever personal experience we have. To play it safe, I like guessing slightly higher than slightly lower.

3. **Safety**

Because it's perfectly safe for healthy adults. This is more of a reason to back up the previous reason, but it's still worth mentioning. Anything you may have come across stating that higher protein intakes are "bad" or "dangerous" for otherwise healthy adults is bullshit. There is literally no research of any kind showing this, and plenty of research (like this, this, this, this, this, this and this) that shows that protein intakes as high as 1.5 g per pound of body weight are safe for healthy active adults with healthy kidneys (and those who do have preexisting kidney issues should obviously have their own dietary guidelines to follow). Additional details here.

So even if you truly believe that there is something remotely magical about a number as precise as 0.82 g/lb, absolutely nothing bad will happen if you consume 0.83 g/lb or 0.9 g/lb or 1 g/lb or 1.3 g/lb or anywhere in between. At worst, nothing will happen. At best, there might be some small benefit. I don't know about you, but I'd rather shoot for a bit more protein than a bit less.

And while we're on the subject of protein-related myths, the idea that the human body can only process 20-30 g of protein at a time is also complete bullshit. You can eat much more protein than that in a single meal if you want/prefer to. I personally do it on a daily basis. The

only difference here is that a meal containing more protein will take a little longer to digest than a meal containing less protein. That's it. Nothing "goes to waste." Additional details here.

So… what's the big take home message?

How much protein should you eat per day?

It's pretty simple. I recommend eating somewhere between **0.8-1.3 g per pound of your current body weight**. As long as you're within this range, *you're good*. Feel free to let your own needs and preferences dictate exactly where within this range you decide to be. Whenever in doubt, an even 1 g of protein per pound will be perfectly fine.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *The only exception to these recommendations (besides those with preexisting kidney issues) are the obese. In the case of people who are very overweight, your protein intake calculations will be overestimated if you use your current body weight due to the excessive amount of fat in your body. So, for truly obese individuals, your **goal body weight** should be used instead. For example, a 300 lb person looking to get down to 200 lbs would use 200 lbs as their weight when calculating their protein intake.*

HOW TO FACTOR PROTEIN INTO YOUR TOTAL CALORIE INTAKE

Now that you know how much protein you should eat each day, the next thing you should know is how to factor this protein intake into your total calorie intake.

This is a step that may seem completely pointless right now, but it will serve a purpose a bit later.

To do this, you just need to know that **1 gram of protein contains 4 calories**.

So, just multiply the amount of protein you're going to eat each day by 4 to figure out exactly how many calories your protein intake will account for.

Here's an example…

Let's use this same random 200 lb person we've already been using throughout this chapter. Let's say they go with an even 1 g of protein per pound, which for them is 200 g of protein per day.

They'd then do 200 g x 4 calories per gram = 800 calories.

Which means that in this example, 800 calories out of this person's total daily calorie intake will come from protein.

That was easy enough, wasn't it? Again, you'll see the purpose of this step a bit later.

EXAMPLE SOURCES OF PROTEIN

The final thing you should probably know about protein is what foods you can get it from. Below is a basic list of the most common higher quality sources:

- Chicken
- Turkey
- Fish
- Beef
- Pork
- Whole Eggs
- Egg Whites
- Protein Supplements (e.g., whey protein powder)
- Dairy (e.g., milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.)
- Nuts
- Beans

This is by no means the definitive list of every food that contains protein, but it does include some of its most abundant and highest quality sources.

Pick your favorites and/or the ones you tolerate best (e.g., if you have issues with dairy, then don't eat dairy).

I personally get the majority of my protein intake from chicken, turkey, eggs and whey protein powder. Those are my preferred/best tolerated sources. Find your own and do the same.

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FAT

After protein, the next most important macronutrient is **fat**.

And, similar to protein, what makes fat so important is that it plays a key role in both the fat loss process AND our overall health.

In terms of the latter, consuming a sufficient amount of fat each day is a requirement for sustaining life and proper function. It plays a crucial role in hormone production (we'll come back to this in a second), the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, the regulation of inflammation and more. It's also your body's second most ideal fuel source (carbs are always #1).

In addition, dietary fat is what provides the essential fatty acids (EFAs). Just like with the essential amino acids, your body requires these EFAs but cannot produce them on its own… they must be supplied through your diet. And as you may have already heard, these EFAs play a ton of important roles of their own.

I know, this is all well and good… health, life, proper function… blah blah blah. *But what role does dietary fat play in fat loss*? A few interesting ones, actually. The most notable are:

- **Optimal hormone levels, specifically testosterone.**
  Research shows a fairly meaningful connection between dietary fat intake and testosterone levels. Testosterone, of course, is the hormone that plays the largest role in our libido and our ability to build and maintain muscle. The higher your testosterone levels are, the better muscle growth/muscle maintenance will be (which is why people with great genetics typically have naturally higher levels, and why people use various drugs to unnaturally increase theirs). Studies (like this, this and this) have linked lower fat diets to lower testosterone levels, and higher fat diets to higher testosterone levels, thus making a sufficient fat intake (and possibly more specifically, a sufficient *saturated fat* intake) a highly beneficial aspect of our diet. This is *especially* true while we're in a deficit, because testosterone levels are already reduced for that reason alone.

- **Improved calorie partitioning.**
  There are four different types of fat (details below), and two in particular – the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA – have been shown to positively affect a variety of physiological processes that may provide some degree of calorie partitioning benefits. Which means, more of the "weight" we lose will be body fat rather than muscle.

- **It's the second most filling macronutrient, and it makes food taste good.**
  Protein is by far the champion of satiety, but fat is #2 on that list thanks to its ability to slow the digestion of a food/meal and the absorption of glucose into the blood stream. This leads to steadier blood sugar levels throughout the day rather than rapid increases and decreases… which is something that negatively affects hunger (more about that later). In addition, fat does a really good job of making food taste good. Even boring, low calorie foods that aren't typically thought of as being tasty (like a salad… throw some dressing on that salad and it suddenly tastes good).

THE FOUR TYPES OF FAT

As I just alluded to a minute ago, there are four major types of fat. Here's a brief breakdown of each:

1. **Trans Fat**
   Found mostly in typical snack foods (chips, cookies, etc.), doughnuts, various pastries and much of the usual crap that tastes yummy but you already know should be limited to some sane (but tolerable) degree, trans fat is really the only type of fat that you want to try to greatly limit or ideally avoid altogether. It provides no positive benefits whatsoever, and the majority of the research I've seen shows a link to a variety of negative health effects.

2. **Saturated Fat**
   Found mostly in animal fat, dairy products (milk, cheese, butter, etc.), and certain oils (coconut and palm), saturated fat is often thought to be just as bad (if not worse) than trans fat and a guaranteed cause of heart disease that should therefore be avoided completely.

   However, this doesn't appear to actually be true… at least not for healthy active people with a healthy overall diet. This whole good/bad, safe/unsafe debate about saturated fat is actually a complicated topic that is way beyond the scope of this book.

   What I will tell you, though, is that a large amount of research in recent years calls into question all of the hate and fear saturated fat has gotten over the last few decades, and it does not appear to be as bad as it was thought to be. Hell, it's probably not even bad at all. Plus, as I mentioned before, saturated fat has been shown to play a positive role in testosterone production.

3. **Monounsaturated Fat**
   Found mostly in various types of nuts and plant oils (e.g., olive oil), monounsaturated fat is generally considered one of the "good" fats due to its positive effects on heart health.

4. **Polyunsaturated Fat**

   Providing us with the essential fatty acids omega-6 and omega-3, polyunsaturated fat is also considered one of the "good" fats. To a certain extent, this can be both true and false. The omega-6 fatty acids are found in foods like various nuts and virtually all food oils, while the omega-3 fatty acids are found primarily in fish and fish oil.

   For this reason, the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 in the typical person's diet is usually far from the ideal 1:1 or 2:1 it should be (usually more like 20:1), with omega-3 intake greatly lacking and omega-6 intake excessively high. This uneven ratio has been shown to be problematic in terms of overall health, which is why a focus on omega-3 consumption (and fish oil supplementation) is so highly recommended. In fact, fish/fish oil and the omega-3 fatty acids they contain (eicosapentaenoic acid aka EPA, and docosahexaenoic acid aka DHA) have been shown to be extremely beneficial.

   This includes a huge list of health benefits (e.g., reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, dementia/Alzheimer's, etc.), as well as the potential calorie partitioning benefits I mentioned before. So, unless you eat a lot of fatty fish on a regular basis, fish oil is one of the very few supplements worth taking (full details coming later).

Now what does all of this mean, you ask?

It's pretty simple. Trans fat should be avoided, and your daily fat intake should come from **a good mix of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats with an extra added emphasis on getting a sufficient amount of the omega-3 fatty acids**.

HOW MUCH FAT SHOULD WE EAT?

Like protein, this again depends on who you ask.

If you look hard enough, you can find fat intake recommendations ranging from as low as 5-10% of your total calorie intake (typically from the **crazy low fat community**) to as high as 80-90% of your total calorie intake (typically from the **even crazier low carb community**).

However, once you eliminate the various crazy diet cults, you'll find that the majority of the sane and logical people in the nutrition world tend to recommend a fat intake range for fat loss that is somewhere in the middle.

Specifically, here is what I recommend…

THE IDEAL FAT INTAKE

Between 15-30% of your total calorie intake.

Yeah, it's a decent sized range, but the sweet spot is somewhere within it.

You can let your personal dietary preferences dictate exactly where within that range you want to be. If you don't really have a preference, something in the middle (i.e., 20-25%) is usually perfectly fine for most people.

HOW MANY GRAMS OF FAT IS THAT PER DAY?

Now, in order to convert this recommendation into an actual amount of grams you need to eat, you just need to remember that **1 gram of fat contains 9 calories**.

Next, figure out what 15-30% of your daily calorie intake is (just multiply your calorie intake by 0.15 and 0.30) and then divide both of your answers by 9.

The amount you get is the ideal range for how many grams of fat you should eat each day.

Confused? Here's an example…

- Let's say someone figured out that their ideal calorie intake for fat loss is 2500 calories per day. (Again, this is just an example.)
- From there they'd figure out that 15-30% of 2500 calories is between 375-750 calories.
- They'd then divide 375 and 750 by 9 (because there are 9 calories per gram of fat) and get a range of 42-83.
- So, in this example, this person would eat between 42-83 grams of fat per day. Since we'll also pretend they like being somewhere in the middle, they might decide to go with an even 20%, which would be 56 grams of fat per day.

Easy enough, right?

EXAMPLE SOURCES OF FAT

While I already mentioned a few sources of fat when describing the four different types, I think we can all agree that everything is better when it's on a neat little list. So, here's a basic list of the most common higher quality sources of fat:

- Fish (fatty types like salmon)
- Fish Oil Supplements (full details coming later)
- Nuts (all types)
- Nut Butters
- Seeds
- Olive Oil
- Coconut Oil
- Avocados
- Eggs/Egg Yolks

This is by no means the definitive list of every food that contains fat, but it does include some of its most abundant and highest quality sources.

Pick your favorites and/or the ones you tolerate best (e.g., if you have a peanut allergy, don't eat peanuts).

I personally get the majority of my fat intake from a variety of different nuts (almonds are my favorite), olive oil and eggs, and get my omega-3s from fish oil supplementation. Those are my preferred/best tolerated sources. Find your own and do the same.

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CARBS

And last but not least, we have carbohydrates… aka **carbs**.

Although, technically speaking, carbs kinda are the "least," at least in terms of what your body truly needs to keep you alive and functioning.

What I mean is, protein and fat are both considered essential in that they each provide us with nutrients that our bodies require but cannot produce on their own (essential amino acids and essential fatty acids, respectively).

Carbs, on the other hand, don't provide us with anything fitting this description.

This is the point where you're supposed to be thinking "but doesn't the body need some amount of carbs for energy?" Not exactly. This is because the body is actually capable of converting fat and protein into the glucose it needs when in a state where carbs (the preferred choice) are not available.

So is this enough to keep you alive? Yup.

Is it ideal? *Definitely not*.

But even more importantly, is this enough to fuel intense exercise such as weight training? Is this enough to maximize performance and recovery? Is this enough to optimally build or maintain muscle? Is this enough to keep you happy and satisfied with your diet?

Hell no!

As damn near every single person who has ever gone over to the "low carb" dark side and eventually found their way out of it will always report, **everything is better when eating more carbs vs eating stupidly low amounts of carbs**.

Carbs make it all better: mental and physical performance, recovery, muscle growth, fat loss, sleep quality, overall mood, and really just life in general. Plus, carbs taste yummy and people are generally happier when eating yummy things.

So, while we may not technically need to eat carbs to live, the human body sure as hell runs a lot better when we do. *So we will*.

How many grams of carbs do you need, exactly? I'll get to that in a second. There's this one annoying topic I need to tackle first.

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF CARBS

At some point, most of us have come to view certain high carb foods in very specific ways. In fact, many of us still do. For example…

- Bad carbs and good carbs.
- Simple carbs and complex carbs.
- Fast carbs and slow carbs.
- Dirty carbs and clean carbs.
- High glycemic carbs and low glycemic carbs.

Now, on one hand, when these classifications are used to get the average person to eat more stuff like fruits and vegetables and less stuff like soda, cookies, and candy, then I'm a big fan.

Generally speaking, this is a fantastic recommendation.

On the other hand, when these classifications are used to conclude that foods like brown rice, sweet potatoes and oatmeal are amazing, while foods like white rice and white potatoes are horrible and should never be eaten because A) they are supposedly unhealthy and B) they will supposedly cause you to gain more fat than equal amounts of these "better" carb sources would, then that's when we have a problem.

Why? **Because statements like this are total horseshit.**

See, the main reason people say things like this is because of the **glycemic index (GI)**, which is a system of classifying foods based on how quickly and how high they raise blood sugar levels.

For this reason, eating in accordance with the glycemic index (eating low GI foods/avoiding high GI foods) is often viewed as a great idea for everything from losing fat or preventing fat from being gained, to controlling hunger, to preventing heart disease, diabetes and more.

And if the glycemic index legitimately was the magical good/bad carb detector people like to pretend it is, then there would really be something to all of this.

But unfortunately, *it's not*.

In reality, the entire concept of the glycemic index is flawed to the point where using it as the sole determinant of whether a high carb food is "good" or "bad" is just plain stupid.

Why? Because the GI value of a food is determined when an amount that contains **exactly 50 g of digestible carbohydrates is eaten in *isolation* after an *overnight fast***.

Those are the only conditions where the GI of a food is truly relevant, and those conditions pretty much never exist in the real world.

Meaning, unless you're eating your carb sources in a manner that makes them all the FIRST and ONLY thing you're eating after a full night of not eating anything (e.g., waking up and having a breakfast comprised of absolutely nothing but white rice by itself), and always eating them in amounts that provide exactly 50 g of carbs… **then the glycemic index is practically useless**.

I explain this in much more detail and really cover this whole idea of supposed good carbs vs bad carbs in my comparison of Brown Rice vs White Rice. Spoiler alert: with all else being equal, they are both exactly the same, or white rice is *slightly better*.

In fact, for me personally, foods like white rice and white potatoes are my favorite and most frequently eaten carb sources.

"BUT WON'T 'BAD CARBS' CAUSE MORE FAT GAINS?!?"

No. Just, no. For the love of all humanity… **NO!**

As we covered earlier in this book and I will gladly repeat again just in case you forgot (and if you did forget, you seriously need to get this head injury looked at ASAP), with all else being equal (meaning the same total calorie, protein, fat and carb intake, same workout program, same effort and consistency, etc.), the specific foods you eat play no direct role in fat loss or fat gain, muscle loss or muscle gain, or any aspect of calorie partitioning.

With all else being equal, there will be no difference in body composition between eating white rice vs brown rice, white potatoes vs sweet potatoes, or even Twinkies vs oatmeal (absolutely not a recommendation… just reminding you of the moral of The Twinkie Diet).

Strictly in terms of your body's ability to lose fat, gain fat, build muscle, maintain muscle or lose muscle… none of this stuff matters. What matters is your total calorie and macronutrient intake for the day. Not how "good" or "bad" your carb sources were.

Obviously, there are big differences when it comes to things like satiety and overall health, which of course is why I recommend the following:

Minimize your consumption of processed, low fiber, nutrient-lacking, lower quality carb sources (like sugar, candy, soda, cookies, chips, pastries, and typical "junk" food) and get the majority of your daily carb intake from more natural, higher fiber, nutrient-dense, higher quality sources (like the foods on the "Example Sources of Carbs" list I'm going to show you in a minute).

Please note, however, that this first type of carb source does NOT need to be avoided *completely*. It just needs to be kept to nothing more than a small part of your overall diet, with that second type of carb source providing most of your daily carb intake.

Speaking of which, let's now figure out exactly what your daily carb intake should be…

THE IDEAL CARB INTAKE

> **Whatever amount is needed to meet your ideal calorie intake after your ideal protein and fat intakes have been factored in.**

Confused? Don't be.

At this point, you've figured out how many grams of protein and fat you will be eating each day. You also know how many calories each of those macronutrients will account for (remember when we factored your protein intake into your daily calorie intake and it seemed pointless… here comes the point).

So, you know all of the calories that are still not yet accounted for in your diet in order to reach the ideal total amount of calories you should be eating each day?

***Those calories* will all come from carbs.**

And, since **1 gram of carbs contains 4 calories**, you just need to divide this leftover amount of calories by 4 to figure out exactly how many grams of carbs you need to eat.

Still confused? It's cool. Here's an example using completely made up amounts and figures that will clear everything up:

1. Let's say some example person figured out that they should be eating **2500** calories per day to lose fat (for the 100th time, this is just an example).

2. Let's also pretend they weigh 200 lbs and want to eat 1 g of protein per pound of body weight each day (just like the example person we used before). That works out to 200 g of protein per day. Since 1 g of protein is 4 calories, they'd then do 200 g x 4 and find that **800** calories out of their 2500 total will come from protein each day.

3. Next, our example person learned that 15-30% of their total calorie intake will come from fat. Let's pretend they like numbers somewhere in the middle and decide to go with an even 20%. They would then calculate that 20% of 2500 is 500 (which of course works out to 56 g of fat per day), which means **500** calories out of their 2500 total will come from fat each day.

4. At this point our example person knows that **800** of their daily calories will come from protein, and **500** will come from fat. Combined, that means **1300** calories out of their 2500 total are now accounted for (in the form of protein and fat).

5. That means there are still **1200** calories that have not yet been accounted for in this example person's diet (2500 - 1300 = 1200). Well, guess what? **All of those 1200 calories will come from carbs.**

6. And, since 1 gram of carbs contains 4 calories, all our example person would need to do now is divide 1200 by 4 and get **300**.

7. Which means that this example person would need to eat about **300** grams of carbs per day.

Now just repeat these steps using your own amounts for calories, protein and fat.

Figure out how many calories are still left over after protein and fat are factored in, and then just divide that leftover amount by 4. The amount you get is how many grams of carbs you should eat per day.

EXAMPLE SOURCES OF CARBS

As promised a minute ago, here is a basic list of the most common higher quality sources of carbs:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Rice (white, brown, whatever)
- White Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes/Yams
- Oats/Oatmeal
- Quinoa
- Beans
- Various Whole Grain/Whole Wheat Foods

This is by no means the definitive list of every food that contains carbs, but it does include some of its most abundant and highest quality sources.

Pick your favorites and/or the ones you tolerate best (e.g., if you have issues with wheat, don't eat wheat).

I personally get the majority of my carb intake from white rice, white potatoes, fruits and vegetables. Those are my preferred/best tolerated sources. Find your own and do the same.

And with that, your macronutrient intake has been designed for superior fat loss.

Why stop there?

CHAPTER 9

Fiber, Water And Micronutrient Intake

FIBER, WATER AND MICRONUTRIENT INTAKE

Calorie intake?

Check!

Macronutrient intake?

Check!

Fiber intake? Water intake? Micronutrient intake?

Unchecked.

You know what that means, right?

Yeah, it's time to change that.

Let's do this…

FIBER

I doubt there's anyone reading this that doesn't already associate **fiber** with poop. And for good reason. The two definitely go hand-in-hand. (Well, that probably wasn't the best expression I could have used when discussing poop. *Or was it*! Anyway…)

Fiber actually plays a few important roles in the human body besides just improving our ability to poop. For example, a sufficient fiber intake has been shown to do the following:

1. Help control hunger and appetite by promoting fullness.
2. Slow digestion by slowing the emptying of the stomach, which helps to regulate blood sugar levels and keep them steadier throughout the day.
3. Reduce the risk of colon cancer.
4. Decrease cholesterol levels.
5. Help you poop, and keep that poop happening regularly.

I know, I know. "Blah blah blah… how will it help me lose fat???"

Well, do you see #1 and #2 on that list? *That's how*.

HOW FIBER HELPS WITH FAT LOSS

Basically, a sufficient fiber intake helps keep you full and satisfied, and thus less likely to eat more calories than you should be eating for your required deficit to exist, and thus more likely to successfully lose fat and keep it off (studies here, here, here, here, here and here).

Fiber accomplishes this in two different ways:

1. **The first is simply that it's just a filling nutrient.**
   It provides "bulk" within your stomach, which increases how physically full your stomach is. And the more physically full your stomach is, the more physically and mentally full you will feel. This is why despite being very low in calories, eating a nice-sized serving of vegetables (which are high in fiber) will often produce a much greater physical feeling of fullness in a person's stomach than a low fiber meal that contains significantly more calories.

2. **The second is that it helps with controlling blood sugar levels.**
   When our blood sugar levels spike and then crash (as they often do when we consume what can best be described as an "empty calorie" meal… such as a meal that is high in sugar and low in everything else), *we get hungry*. Fiber just so happens to be one of the main nutrients (fat is another) that helps to slow the digestion of the foods we eat, which prevents large spikes and equally large crashes, which minimizes the hunger signal this kind of thing will cause.

So, how much fiber should we eat per day to maximize these benefits?

Well, if you're thinking "as much as possible," you'd be wrong.

While eating a sufficient amount of fiber will have nothing but beneficial effects, an excessive amount of fiber can be problematic. The most common side effects include bloating, gas and diarrhea (all the fun stuff), as well as impaired nutrient absorption.

So, although not eating enough fiber is definitely bad, eating too much fiber is bad as well. Therefore, as usual, the ideal spot is going to be somewhere in the middle. Here's what I recommend…

THE IDEAL FIBER INTAKE

12-17 grams of fiber per day for every 1000 calories you eat.

So, if you eat 2000 calories per day, you're aiming for 24-34 g of fiber each day. If you eat 2500 calories per day, you're aiming for 30-43 g. If you eat 3000 calories per day, you're aiming for 36-51 g. And so on.

To maximize the hunger-controlling benefits, it would be a good idea to spread your daily intake out so that you're eating a decent amount of fiber at each meal.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *If your fiber intake is currently much lower than it should be (like it often is for people on a typical "modern diet" comprised primarily of nutrient-less junk), take a couple of weeks to gradually increase it to sufficient levels rather than suddenly eating a lot more fiber tomorrow than you've previously been eating.*

EXAMPLE SOURCES OF FIBER

Last but not least, here is a basic list of the most common higher quality sources of fiber:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Nuts
- Beans
- White Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes/Yams
- Oats/Oatmeal
- Quinoa
- Various Whole Grain/Whole Wheat Foods

This is by no means the definitive list of every food that contains fiber, but it does include some of its most abundant and highest quality sources.

Pick your favorites and/or the ones you tolerate best (e.g., if you have issues with beans, don't eat beans).

I personally get the majority of my fiber intake from vegetables, fruits, nuts and potatoes. Those are my preferred/best tolerated sources. Find your own and do the same.

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WATER

Okay. Serious question. Does this one really need an introduction?

I mean, is it possible that someone might not be familiar with **water**? What it is? Why we need it to live and function?

These are all questions I asked myself while writing the outline for this book. And, after careful consideration, the conclusion I came to was *no*. So, I'm going to skip right over that part.

But hey, if I happen to be wrong, and there's someone reading this right now who maybe has never heard of water, or is possibly just disappointed by the idea of me not going into great detail to describe what it is and why it's a thing we need sufficient amounts of to… you know… *not die*, then by all means feel free to Google "water" and do your own research.

Or, if you'd prefer a more up-close-and-personal experience with it, I'd suggest walking into your nearest bathroom or kitchen, going up to the big sink-like structure you'll usually find somewhere in the middle of the room, and then turning/pushing/lifting the knob/handle in the proper direction. And then… behold… *water*!

Now that that's out of the way, let's get to what you actually care about.

HOW DOES WATER HELP WITH FAT LOSS?

Aside from the obvious (suboptimal hydration can **hinder physical and mental performance during exercise**) and the less obvious (an insufficient water intake **causes water retention**, which increases the potential for our body weight tracking to be thrown off… more about this later), the biggest positive effect a sufficient water intake has on fat loss appears to be its ability to **promote fullness**.

Studies (like this, this, this, this and this) and real-world experience have shown that consuming a sufficient amount of water each day – especially before, during and after meals – **increases satiety**.

And the more satiated you are, the less likely you're going to be to eat more calories than you're supposed to be eating.

Which brings us to yet another obvious question…

HOW MUCH WATER SHOULD WE DRINK PER DAY?

Alright.

Wanna know a secret?

This question is one of my least favorite questions of all time. For real. It's in my top three (or would it be bottom three?) and has held that position for over a decade.

The reason why I hate this question so much is because I just don't have a good answer to it. I've also never had a good answer to it, and, as far as I can tell, I may never have a good answer to it.

Why is this, you ask? Two reasons:

1. **There is no universally ideal water intake that is right for everyone.**
   The amount of water a person needs each day varies significantly from one individual to the next based on everything from the climate they live in (the hotter the weather is, the more you're going to sweat), to their exercise activity level (someone who exercises more will sweat more than someone who doesn't), to their non-exercise activity level (a mailman or construction worker will sweat more throughout the day than someone who sits at a desk in front of a computer), and more.

2. **Research is inconclusive, and recommendations (which are often based on nothing) vary.**
   You know the "8 glasses of water a day" recommendation that's been around forever and will probably be the answer your grandmother gives you if you asked her how much water you should drink each day? Well, there's no actual evidence behind it whatsoever (studies here and here). As for the evidence that does exist, there's simply nothing I've ever seen that made me conclusively say "ahh, okay, now I know exactly what my ideal water intake should be." As a fun added bonus, an excessive water intake can cause a variety of problems (from the annoyingness of having to pee every 20 minutes to the potential deadliness of water intoxication due to a freakishly/stupidly high water intake).

For both of these reasons, *I hate this question*.

But, I know it's a question that you, everyone else who reads this book, and everyone who contacts me in some way (via email, comment, social media, the dreaded real-life conversation, etc.) will want an answer to.

So, despite not actually having one, I'm forced to give one anyway.

Which means, I'm going to resort to doing what I've previously done when faced with this dilemma in the past. And that is, I'm going to provide you with some commonsense advice…

THE IDEAL WATER INTAKE: COMMONSENSE ADVICE

- Don't overdo or underdo your water intake. Both are bad.
- If you're thirsty, drink water. Thirst is the human body's way of letting you know it needs water. Yet another one of its many built-in survival features.
- If your mouth is dry, there's a good chance it's a sign that you need to drink more water.
- If you live in a warmer climate, you should drink more water than someone who lives in a colder climate.
- If it's hotter out than it usually is (e.g., winter vs summer, or normal summer weather vs a heatwave), you should probably drink more water.
- If you're sweating due to activity of any kind (including exercise), drink more water to replenish those lost fluids.
- If you're someone who naturally sweats more in general, you should drink more water than someone who doesn't.
- If you find that you're *constantly* peeing all the time – to an excessive, social-life-ruining degree – you're probably drinking more water than you need to be.
- If you find that you pee very *infrequently* and often go very long periods of time without having to go, you're probably not drinking enough.
- If your urine is a darker shade of yellow (or potentially even brown), especially throughout the second half of the day, you should definitely drink more water.
- If your urine is a very light shade of yellow or practically clear, especially throughout the second half of the day, chances are you're drinking a sufficient amount of water.
- In most cases, the color of your urine is going to be the best indicator of whether you're drinking enough water. Darker = probably not enough. Light/clear = probably just fine. (Fun Fact: Certain vitamins can change the color of your urine. So, for example, if you take a

multivitamin and notice that your pee is a bright shade of neon yellow soon after, it's the multivitamin. Don't worry though, it's harmless. Or you might have superpowers. Maybe both.)

- **I personally drink somewhere between 0.5-1 gallon of water per day. More on the days I work out/sweat more, less on the days I don't. More in the summer, less in the winter. And so on. Basically, I use thirst, urine color, frequency of urination and how I feel in general to dictate exactly how much water I end up drinking on a given day. As far as recommendations go, this is currently (and may forever be) the best recommendation I have.**

WHAT COUNTS AS "WATER"?

Another question I get asked all the time that I fortunately *do* have a good, conclusive answer to is whether other drinks that contain water "count" toward a person's total water intake for the day.

With the sole exception of alcohol, the answer is yes.

The water contained in other things you might drink (e.g., coffee, tea, milk, protein shakes, diet soda, sports drinks, orange juice, etc.) **all count toward your total water intake for the day**. Yup, *even caffeinated drinks* like coffee and tea (studies here and here). Except for alcohol, all of your fluid intake counts.

In fact, the water contained in some of the foods you eat (e.g., many fruits and vegetables contain water) counts as well, but that's way less easy and realistic to measure.

Now let me answer a question that may have just popped into your head…

SHOULD I ONLY DRINK WATER?

In a perfect world, probably.

But, that might not be entirely realistic for everyone living in *this* world. As mentioned a minute ago, we have plenty of other appealing options available.

Soda, diet soda, sports drinks, fruit juices, milk, coffee, tea, alcohol and on and on and on.

Now, in some cases, some of these other drinks contain **no calories**. *This is good*. After water, non-calorie drinks will always be the next best option to choose. Yes, even diet soda. When consumed in sane amounts, it's fine. (Details here and here.)

After that, **low calorie** drinks would be the next best option to choose. And waaaay down at the bottom of this list of options would be drinks that contain anything resembling a **meaningful amount of calories**.

The reason why is obvious…

It's A LOT easier, faster and less filling to drink X calories than it is to eat X calories.

Which is why, for the purpose of controlling hunger and preventing yourself from consuming more calories than you should be, my default recommendation when it comes to what you should drink each day is this…

Greatly limit (or completely avoid) drinks that contain meaningful amounts of calories. The primary source of your water intake should always be *actual water*. Non-calorie drinks would be an okay secondary choice. And from there, if you're going to drink something that contains calories, be sure to accurately count it all toward your daily allotted total and use moderation to avoid overconsumption (which, again, is *extremely easy* to unintentionally let happen when you're drinking your calories).

MICRONUTRIENTS

As explained earlier, our macronutrients are protein, fat and carbs. We should ideally be consuming significant amounts of all three.

At the next level down, we have our **micronutrients**, which include all of the various vitamins and minerals that the human body requires to sustain life and proper function, all of which are only needed in relatively small amounts. In most cases, we're talking milligrams rather than grams.

Since there are quite a few of them (here's a list), this could quickly turn into an entire book about micronutrition if I attempted to break down the role(s) each micronutrient plays. So, I won't.

The good news, however, is that I don't actually need to. In fact, this is going to be a surprisingly quick and easy section of the book, because my micronutrient recommendations are going to be a lot simpler than you might be expecting. You'll see why in a minute.

First, let's cover the things you need to know and/or might be wondering about.

IS MICRONUTRIENT INTAKE IMPORTANT?

Short answer? **Yes.**

It goes like this. Calorie intake... then macronutrient intake... then micronutrient intake. They ALL matter, and they are ALL important parts of your diet. This is just the order of that importance.

Why is micronutrient intake important, you ask?

As I alluded to a few paragraphs ago, consuming a sufficient amount of each micronutrient is a requirement for **sustaining life** and **proper function**, as well as **optimizing health** and **preventing disease**. Deficiencies in one or more micronutrients can lead to a variety of detrimental health effects depending on exactly which nutrient is deficient and the exact degree of that deficiency.

For this reason alone, *your micronutrient intake is definitely important*.

Why am I going out of my way to make this point? Because, once some people understand that losing fat is a simple matter of being in a caloric deficit, their eyes begin to light up with a question that goes something like this: "So that means I can just create a deficit while eating a diet comprised entirely of shitty low-quality food? Awesome!!!"

This, of course, is a terrible idea. Not because it won't cause fat loss. *It will*… assuming the person can consistently sustain a deficit on a diet that is likely to make things harder and suckier from top to bottom (especially in terms of hunger and muscle loss) than it ever should be.

Further, it's a terrible idea from the standpoint of overall health in general. Which, in case you weren't aware, is just *slightly* more important than your desire to look good naked.

As I explained earlier, food quantity is always going to be the key to fat loss. BUT, *food quality still definitely matters*. Your overall health is the biggest part of why this is so.

As it turns out, one of the main things that determines the "quality" of a food is its presence (or lack thereof) of micronutrients. The more nutrient-dense a food is, the more likely it is to be considered a high-quality food. Conversely, a lack of micro (and/or macro) nutrition is a characteristic common among low-quality foods.

This, by the way, is a large part of what makes typical "junk food" *junk* in the first place. It's what the term "empty calories" is used to describe. A food that contains a meaningful amount of calories but little to no nutritional value.

This is something we need to care about because losing fat requires us to place a limit on how many calories we consume each day. Therefore, we should ideally minimize our consumption of empty calorie foods (note my use of the word "minimize" rather than "completely eliminate") to ensure we get the most nutritional value possible (and reach a sufficient macronutrient and micronutrient intake) from the calories we do consume.

WHAT ABOUT FOR FAT LOSS?

As usual, you're probably less interested in the effect micronutrient intake has on your overall health and more interested in its effect on fat loss.

So, does your micronutrient intake affect your ability to lose fat?

Directly? *Nope*.

A deficit is always going to cause body fat to be lost, regardless of anything else happening (or not happening) within your diet.

But indirectly? *Yup*.

Think about it this way…

If an insufficient micronutrient intake is capable of negatively affecting your overall health and function, **it's capable of negatively affecting every single physiological process taking place within your body – be it directly or indirectly – *including fat loss***.

Want an example? Okay.

A deficiency in zinc and/or vitamin D (both of which are micronutrients) has been shown to lower testosterone levels (sources here, here, here and here). Testosterone, as we covered earlier, is the hormone playing the largest role in our ability to build/maintain muscle (among other important things). Plus, as testosterone goes down, cortisol (the stress hormone) goes up. This lovely combination will result in worse calorie partitioning (meaning more muscle loss/less fat loss) among many other negative things that we don't want (e.g., water retention, reduced libido, etc.).

Want another example? Okay.

Various micronutrients play key roles in our immune function. Meaning, insufficient amounts of certain micronutrients can make us more likely to get sick. Now let me ask you a few questions. When you're sick, do you become more or less likely to miss workouts? Do you become more or less likely to stick to your diet? Do you become more or less likely to do what needs to be done simply as a result of the fact that being sick makes every aspect of life harder and suckier?

These are just two examples of the *many ways* an insufficient micronutrient intake can negatively affect your fat loss results.

And that brings us to our next obvious question…

HOW MUCH OF EACH MICRONUTRIENT SHOULD WE EAT PER DAY?

Wanna hear a fun fact?

I don't track my micronutrient intake closely.

In fact, I really don't pay much attention to it at all.

Seriously.

Calories and macronutrients? Of course. But each individual micronutrient? Nope, not really.

So if you asked me exactly how much of whatever vitamin or whatever mineral I ate today, or yesterday, or any other day for that matter, I honestly couldn't tell you.

It's not that I don't care about micronutrients. *I certainly do*. And it's not that micronutrient intake isn't important. *It certainly is*.

It's just that, one of the wonderful side effects of eating a high-quality diet on a daily basis – one that is comprised of a good balance of protein, fat and carbs (with no unnecessary restrictions) that come primarily via higher quality nutrient-dense foods (with an extra added focus on fruit and vegetable consumption) – *is that a sufficient micronutrient intake tends to take care of itself*.

How do I know this? A few ways.

For starters, I've tracked the crap out of my diet at various points over the last 15+ years and I've already seen everything add up pretty well from a micronutrient standpoint. And the fact that my diet is boringly consistent in terms of my food choices means that those numbers are likely continuing to be hit on a daily basis just the same.

In addition, my annual blood test consistently confirms that everything is exactly where it should be and no nutrient deficiencies are present. I'd recommend a yearly blood test to everyone for this very purpose.

And the few micronutrients I already know I'm lacking thanks to previous blood test results and my own personal dietary preferences in general? They are all taken care of through supplementation. (Example #1: I hate dairy and don't digest it well, so calcium is lacking in my diet. Example #2: I don't eat a lot of fatty fish, so I know my omega-3 intake is lacking. Example #3: I work indoors and don't get a ton of sun most days, especially during colder months, so I know my vitamin D levels are low.) Supplementation helps to fill in these gaps. (More about supplementation later.)

And as a just-in-case dietary safety net, I also take a basic multivitamin, thus adding to my peace of mind that all of my micronutrient bases are covered (more about this later as well).

Now, having said all of that, let's get back to the question…

How much of each micronutrient should you eat each day?

Well, if you're expecting me to list every single micronutrient and give you a recommendation for each, that's not going to happen. Why? Because it's simply not necessary for the vast majority of the population.

Instead, I will give you a few simple guidelines to follow that will ensure your micronutrient intake ends up being what it ideally should be without you actually having to directly make it happen.

Just like I do.

Here's how…

THE IDEAL MICRONUTRIENT INTAKE: HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

- Ensure that your total daily calorie intake comes from the ideal balance of protein, fat and carbs outlined earlier in this book.
- Get the majority of each of those macronutrients from the types of natural, higher quality, nutrient-dense foods that I included on the "example foods" list for each.
- Don't unnecessarily restrict or completely avoid entire food groups that have no legitimate reason to be restricted or avoided. Doing so only decreases your potential food choices, which only increases the potential for deficiencies to exist.
- Consume a variety of vegetables and fruits *every single day*. **A good general guideline to aim for is 4-6 total servings of vegetables and fruits each day** (e.g., 3 servings of vegetables + 2 servings of fruit = 5 total servings for the day)**.** Since vegetables are generally lower in calories than fruit, I typically recommend a slightly higher ratio of vegetables to fruit in a person's diet… especially when the goal is fat loss and your calorie intake is reduced. Which vegetables and fruits should you eat? Whichever ones you like best.
- Once all of the above is taken care of, use supplementation to fill in any remaining gaps that may exist within your diet. A blood test would be the only way to know for sure what, if any, nutrient deficiencies may be present. Also, consider taking a multivitamin for "dietary insurance" purposes. (Again, supplements will be covered in detail later.)

And… that's it.

That's all of it.

That's how to consume a sufficient amount of micronutrients each day without directly trying to.

What?

Were you expecting me to recommend a specific amount of each micronutrient for you to eat?

I told you this would be a lot simpler than you were expecting.

This book is all about making fat loss as easy and sustainable for you as it can possibly be. Losing your mind trying to accurately track and consistently consume a specific amount of *dozens* of micronutrients would be the opposite of that.

Now, let's move on to making another aspect of fat loss as easy and sustainable for you as possible…

CHAPTER 10

Meal Frequency, Eating Style, Food Choices And Diet Organization

▶ MEAL FREQUENCY, EATING STYLE, FOOD CHOICES AND DIET ORGANIZATION

Throughout this book, I've said over and over again that a caloric deficit is the only fundamental requirement of fat loss.

To be completely honest, that wasn't entirely true.

You see, there is actually one other fundamental requirement involved here.

And that is… **adherence to the diet that causes that deficit to exist**.

Because, you can have the world's greatest diet (and workout), and you can set up the most perfect deficit known to man, but if you can't then put it all into action and consistently sustain that deficit day-in and day-out, *it's not going to work*.

So, what we need to do next is make things as adherable for you as possible.

In terms of your diet, the keys to both short-term and long-term adherence are going to be the choices you make when determining your ideal **meal frequency**, **eating style**, **food choices** and overall **diet organization**.

These are all factors that can make or break your ability to stick to your diet.

So, what am I talking about when I say "meal frequency, eating style, food choices and diet organization"?

I'm talking about stuff like this…

- Should you eat big meals or small meals?
- Should you eat frequently or infrequently?
- Should you eat every 2-3 hours or every 4-5 hours?
- Should your diet be more strict or more flexible?

- Should you eat "clean" 100% of the time or do some form of "IIFYM" (If It Fits Your Macros) where you maybe eat "clean" 80-90% of the time and "dirty" 10-20% of the time?
- Should you go Paleo, or raw, or gluten-free, or anti-grain, or vegan, or organic, or whatever the hell else?
- Should you eat 3 meals a day or 6 meals? 2 meals or 7 meals? 4 meals or 5 meals?
- Should you do some form of intermittent fasting or eat regularly throughout the day?
- Should you eat early or late?
- Should you eat breakfast or skip it?
- Should you stop eating at a specific time at night?
- Should you eat more carbs earlier or later?
- Should you combine certain foods and nutrients in a single meal and avoid combining others?
- And on and on and on.

Sound familiar? Yeah, it's all of the stuff that most people lose their minds over.

THE ONE ANSWER TO ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS

So, what's the answer to these kinds of questions? What's most effective? What should you do?

Brace yourself, because this is going to get *super complicated*.

You ready?

The answer to every single one of these questions and every similar question like them is: *who cares*?

Why? Because with all else being equal, this stuff matters either very little or not at all.

Yes, seriously.

The only small exception to this would be your pre- and post-workout meals, which I'll be covering later. But even in that case, one of the main points you should take from that upcoming chapter is that in the grand scheme of your diet, even that stuff is just of minor importance.

But this stuff? *It's of less-than-minor importance*.

In fact, as long as your total calorie, macronutrient and micronutrient intake is what it needs to be at the end of the day, I'd go so far as to say that most of these factors are of no direct importance whatsoever.

I know. You've probably heard differently. You've probably heard all kinds of things from all kinds of sources that provided what seemed like fantastic arguments for why certain things on the list above are directly responsible for the effectiveness of your diet.

But the truth is, that's all just a big collection of myths, bullshit and people trying to pass off their personal preferences onto everyone else.

But the truth is, that's all just a big collection of myths, bullshit and people trying to pass off their personal preferences onto everyone else.

In reality, not a single factor listed above will have any truly significant *direct effect* (positive or negative) on any aspect of fat loss, muscle growth, muscle maintenance, calorie partitioning or anything similar.

Yes, seriously.

With all else being equal, I've seen no remotely conclusive evidence to support one side of these factors being superior to the opposite side, and I've personally experimented with most of it myself and found there to be no differences or benefits of any kind one way or the other.

Every unbiased, evidence-based person I know has reported the exact same thing.

Do you know what that means? It means…

- Your meals can be whatever the hell size you want them to be.
- You can eat as frequently or infrequently as you want.
- You can eat every 2-3 hours, every 4-5 hours, or do some form of intermittent fasting.
- Your diet can be as strict or as flexible as you want it to be.

- You can eat 100% "clean" foods 100% of the time, or eat those same clean foods maybe 80-90% of the time and various supposed "dirty" foods the other 10-20% of the time.
- You can be as Paleo, raw, gluten-free, anti-grain, natural, vegan, organic, or whatever the hell else as you want to be. Or, you can be absolutely none of it.
- You can eat 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 meals per day. Shit, you can eat 3.5 or 5 1/4 meals for all I care.
- You can eat breakfast bright and early, or skip it completely.
- You can eat whatever combinations of foods and nutrients that you want.
- You can stop eating calories and/or carbs at a specific time at night, or you can feel free to eat however the hell late you want to eat.
- And on and on and on.

And in every single case – *with all else being equal* – there will be no truly meaningful direct difference in the end.

Why? Because in terms of your diet, changes in body composition happen solely as a result of your overall calorie, protein, fat and carb intake. The specific food sources that provide those calories and macronutrients, and the specific manner in which they are consumed throughout the day, will play no direct significant role.

Yes, seriously.

Now this is the point where the crazy people who have developed an emotional (or perhaps financial) attachment to their preferred style of eating like to say stuff like "You're just a hater, bro!"

As if I'm saying this because I have some kind of vendetta against certain ways of eating. Which is hilarious.

The funniest part of all is that I WISH I was wrong. I WISH that some version of this stuff actually played a meaningful role in that regard.

I WISH that a certain approach to meal frequency, eating style, food selection/restriction or diet organization truly did provide some degree of benefit that would directly improve any aspect of fat loss (or muscle growth) for me in any kind of noticeable way.

If it did, I would be the first person to implement that approach and this would be a chapter explaining exactly what that approach is and exactly how you can implement it yourself.

But the reality is that this just isn't the case. So instead, this is a chapter about how most of this stuff doesn't actually matter. Because honestly… it doesn't.

Well… *except for one tiny thing*.

DIET ADHERENCE: THE X-FACTOR

Ah yes, **diet adherence**… the kryptonite to the "with all else being equal" assumption.

See, while none of this stuff has any *direct* significant impact on your results, the same cannot be said for its potential *indirect* impact.

In that regard, this stuff can be super important.

How so?

Well, like I said at the beginning of this chapter, these are the factors that can make or break your ability to stick to your diet. Meal frequency, eating style, food choices and diet organization are the factors that determine if your diet ends up being preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable for you (#PECS)… *or the complete opposite*.

So yeah, *indirectly*… this stuff can play an absolutely crucial role in your results solely from the standpoint of adherence.

Luckily for us though, it's surprisingly easy to get right.

THE SIMPLE SECRET TO DIET ADHERENCE

So, we already answered all of the questions on that list from the perspective of "what's more effective?" And the answer, of course, was that with all else being equal, the effectiveness is virtually the same.

Now let's answer all of those questions again, but this time from the perspective of "what's better for *your own* diet adherence?"

The answer 100% of the time is this:

> **Whatever will make you most likely to consistently meet your ideal total calorie intake, macronutrient intake and micronutrient intake each day… *THAT'S what you should do*. Whatever is most convenient, enjoyable and sustainable for you, your life and your specific dietary needs and preferences… *THAT'S what you should do*.**

Read that again.

And again.

And then one more time, just for fun.

When you're trying to decide how many meals to eat a day, or how frequently you should eat them, or how early/late you should eat them, or if you should eat breakfast or skip it, or if you should allow or restrict certain types of foods or food groups, or any other similar question about the way you should go about eating over the course of the day, the only factors worth taking into consideration are your own personal needs and preferences and simply doing whatever the hell suits you best.

That's all there is to it. It really is that simple.

But wait… what's that you say?

You'd still like to have a little bit of guidance anyway? Alright, no problem at all. Here are my general recommendations…

MY GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The majority of your calorie and macronutrient intake should *always* come from higher quality, minimally processed, nutrient-dense foods you enjoy, while the typical junkier foods should be kept to a sane yet still enjoyable and sustainable minimum.**

  Specifically, a ratio like **90/10** or **80/20** (of "good/clean" foods to "bad/dirty" foods) tends to

be an ideal balance for *most* people in terms of overall health, micronutrient intake and… you know… *life not sucking*. Why? Because when many people attempt to go the **100/0** route of completely restricting everything deemed "bad" and forcing themselves to never eat these kinds of foods ever again under any circumstance, it causes them to eventually reach a breaking point. A breaking point fueled by unnecessarily depriving themselves of something they really want. A breaking point that ultimately causes them to "give in" by doing a massive binge, or by going off their diet for an extended period of time, or by quitting their diet altogether. Keeping those "junkier" foods they love available to them as a *minor* part of their overall diet keeps them happy and helps to prevent this "breaking point" from ever existing in the first place.

That's not to say that 100/0 is never ideal for anyone, though. *Sometimes it is*. Why? Because there are *some* people who lack the self-control to not go overboard when attempting something like 90/10. That 10% starts to creep up to 20%, then 30%, and so on. For these people, more dietary strictness is necessary for them to adhere to their diet.

So the question then becomes, are you a 90/10 or 80/20 person, or are you a 100/0 person? This is something that only you will know the answer to. My recommendation is simply to ensure that your diet suits the type of person you are rather than trying to force yourself to be something you're not. (For additional details on this topic, check out my unbiased comparison of Clean Eating vs IIFYM.)

- While there may be some people who can make as few as 2 meals per day work (typically as part of an intermittent fasting approach), and some who can make as many as 6 (or more) meals per day work, **the majority of the population trying to lose fat will usually do best with somewhere between 3-5 meals per day**. That is my recommendation to *most* people. However, if you happen to prefer 2 meals or 6 meals for whatever reason (and that reason isn't some kind of baseless disordered obsession with food that is likely to only be detrimental to your heath and sanity), and feel it's what suits you best, then by all means feel free to eat that many meals.

- Someone with a lower daily calorie intake will generally end up having to eat a bunch of tiny unsatisfying meals if they try to spread their daily calories out over something like 5-6 meals per day. In these cases, consuming larger meals and less of them (e.g., 3) may be ideal. Feel free to experiment and see what you like best.

- Someone with a higher daily calorie intake might feel like they are about to explode if they try to cram all of their daily calories into something like 3 huge meals per day. In this case, it may be more ideal to consume additional meals (e.g., 4-5) and make them a more moderate size. Feel free to experiment and see what you like best.

- You can do things the exact same way every day, or you can change things a bit from one day to the next depending on what you prefer doing that day. For example, maybe you like eating 4 meals per day, every day. Or, maybe 5 meals suit you best on training days, and 3 meals suit you best on rest days. Or 4 meals on weekdays, and 3 meals on weekends. Or any similar example like this. Whatever suits you best… *do that*. **I will say, however, that being consistent with whatever eating pattern and overall structure you choose tends to be ideal from an adherence standpoint.**

- For the purpose of controlling hunger, eating a decent amount of protein and fiber at each meal would be a good idea for the reasons already covered in this book.

- Eat 4-6 total servings of vegetables and fruits every day.

- Don't force yourself to restrict foods/food groups you enjoy and have no legitimate reason to restrict. (Additional details here: How To Choose The Best Foods For Your Diet.)

- Don't force yourself to follow any sort of dietary "rules" that you have no legitimate reason to follow and just make things unnecessarily hard or annoying for you.

- Avoid foods that you have legitimate issues digesting. So if certain foods make you (literally and/or figuratively) feel kinda crappy (e.g., gas, bloating, nasal congestion, lethargy, cramps, constipation, diarrhea, etc.), minimize your consumption of those foods or maybe even avoid them completely.

- Avoid foods you just don't enjoy eating. Even if they are "good" foods. If you hate them, there's no need to force yourself to eat them. There is always some other food or combination of foods that will provide whatever "good" thing that food supposedly provides. (I cover this topic in detail here: The Ultimate List Of Superfoods.)

- If you prefer eating earlier, eat earlier. If you prefer eating later, eat later. If you prefer both, do both. If you prefer eating breakfast, eat it. If not, don't. If you're not sure, experiment and find what suits you best. (Additional details here: When And How Often Should You Eat?)

- If you're the kind of person who loves variety and prefers eating different foods and different meals in different combinations on most/all days, feel free to do so. But if you're the kind of person who prefers less variety and more consistency, and likes eating many of the same foods and the same meals each day with very few changes, that's perfectly fine as well.
- If you're someone who does better with a more strict and structured diet, do that. If you're someone who does better with a more flexible diet, do that. If you're not sure, experiment.
- **Simply put, meet the various dietary guidelines laid out in this book in whatever the hell way makes you the happiest. Because when a person's diet makes them happy (rather than annoyed, inconvenienced, uncomfortable, unnecessarily restricted, etc.), that person becomes a whole lot more likely to stick to that diet and consistently meet those guidelines.**
- If you'd like to see a detailed breakdown of how I personally do all of this within my own diet, check out My Diet: A Complete Guide To What And How I Eat… And Why.
- For some additional details, I cover many of these topics in the following articles:

  - My Diet: A Complete Guide To What And How I Eat… And Why
  - Clean Eating vs IIFYM – Which Is REALLY Better?
  - How Many Meals A Day – When & How Often Should You Eat?
  - How To Choose The Best Foods For Your Diet & Adjust Everything To Fit Your Preferences
  - The Ultimate List Of Superfoods

And just like that, you know how to structure every aspect of your diet to improve adherence and give it the sustainability it needs for superior fat loss to occur.

CHAPTER 11

Nutrient Timing

NUTRIENT TIMING

In the last chapter, I explained that the sole determining factor in choosing your meal frequency, eating style, food choices and diet organization is your own personal needs and preferences.

As in, doing whatever suits you best and therefore makes you most likely to consistently get the important parts of your diet (your total calorie, macronutrient and micronutrient intake) right each day.

However, while making that point, I briefly alluded to the fact that there was one *minor* exception to this statement.

That "exception" happens to be a topic that is surprisingly simple despite how complicated most people think it is and many others unnecessarily make it out to be.

I'm of course referring to a little something called **nutrient timing**.

WHAT IS NUTRIENT TIMING?

Nutrient timing is the concept of strategically adjusting the way you consume your calorie and macronutrient intake over the course of the day.

Meaning, you eat certain amounts of certain things at certain times.

For what purpose? To (hypothetically) improve everything from calorie partitioning and body composition to training performance and recovery.

While this technically includes timing issues like whether or not there is a benefit to eating breakfast (with all else being equal, it makes no difference whatsoever) or whether bad things will happen if you eat late at night (with all else being equal, it makes no difference whatsoever), these aren't really the factors people associate with the term "nutrient timing."

Instead, "nutrient timing" is most often used in reference to the specific timing and composition of your **pre-, during and post-workout meals**.

This includes:

- Exactly which nutrients those meals should contain (protein? carbs? fat?).

- Exactly what amounts of each nutrient there should be in each meal (how many grams?).
- Exactly where those nutrients should come from (solid food? a shake? slow digesting sources? fast digesting sources?).
- Exactly how soon before and after your workout they should be consumed (immediately? within 30 minutes? 60 minutes? 2 hours? longer?).

Let's examine all of this now, separate fact from fiction, and adjust every single meaningful factor to our advantage.

PRE-, DURING AND POST-WORKOUT MEALS

Let's start with the basics.

For the few people who didn't properly learn their prefixes in school, the pre-workout meal is the meal consumed before your workout, and the post-workout meal is the meal consumed after your workout.

Take a wild guess when the "during workout" meal is consumed.

The theoretical purpose of these meals is that what's eaten before (and, if needed, during) your workout will help fuel the workout itself and maximize your performance throughout, while what's eaten after your workout will help optimize the recovery process, increase protein synthesis, decrease protein breakdown, and really just ensure that your body immediately has all of the supplies it needs in order to recover, adapt and improve the way you want it to.

But here's where things get interesting.

If you've been paying attention to the overall perception of these meals over the last decade or so, you've probably noticed that a pretty big transition has taken place.

If you have no idea what I'm talking about, don't worry.

It just means we're going to need to hop into my DeLorean, generate the 1.21 gigawatts of electricity we need, and then take a little walk down memory lane…

PAST MISTAKES

From at least the late 1990s up until the late 2000s (and for many, still up till today), nutrient timing was regarded as a critical factor for muscle growth and fat loss… often to the point where it was viewed as being equal to (if not more important than) stuff like your total calorie and macronutrient intake.

In fact, getting your pre-/during/post-workout meals *absolutely perfect* was viewed as being not just beneficial, but a *requirement* for getting the results you want.

In fact, getting your pre-/during/post-workout meals absolutely perfect was viewed as being not just beneficial, but a requirement for getting the results you want.

Many popular fitness gurus would make this claim by saying things

like "if your post-workout meal isn't eaten at this exact time with these exact nutrients from these exact sources in these exact amounts, then your workout will have been for nothing."

They'd often reference a so-called "**post-workout anabolic window**" of time that existed for just a matter of minutes after your workout during which you could easily make or break your success.

If you were able to consume the perfect meal during that time, you'd be guaranteed muscle growth, fat loss, a new car, billions of dollars and all sorts of wonderful things. But if you consumed the wrong things, or the right things in the wrong amounts, or – *worst of all* – somehow just missed that tiny magical window of time altogether, you'd be guaranteed to lose muscle, gain fat and just fail as a human being.

And speed was of the essence!

You must have an ultra-fast digesting liquid meal… aka a **post-workout shake**! Solid foods will take much too long to digest and you'll miss the window! You need the fastest digestion possible! Don't include a single gram of fat or fiber in this meal because fat and fiber slow digestion!

And you must get your protein only from a whey protein supplement (the fastest digesting protein source). Or whey hydrolysate, the fastest of the fast! And you must get your carbs from the highest glycemic sources known to man… dextrose, maltodextrin or the always entertaining waxy maize starch.

Or better yet, drink Surge!!! Surge, of course, was (and I guess still is?) one of the most popular supplements that came out during this period of time that was formulated for this very purpose and pimped out by what seemed like every fitness guru and all of their fitness guru friends.

Take 3 scoops before your workout, 8 scoops during your workout and 39 scoops after your workout!

Or something like that.

And you must do it quickly! You need to finish your last set of your last exercise and immediately start drinking your post-workout shake! Literally put down the weights and drink!

If you take even a second to get your crap out of your locker first or dare take 5 minutes to drive back home, you will miss the window and your entire workout will have ended up being a complete waste of time!

And you'll instantly go catabolic and lose all of your muscle!

And your life will be ruined forever!

What?

What's that, you say?

A lot of this stuff sounds exaggerated?

Well, as someone who was right there in 2006 drinking his whey/dextrose shake in the locker room just minutes after his workout (not exactly an ideal dining experience, by the way), I can promise you that it's really not that exaggerated at all.

And I feel like I might be making this all sound like the kind of thing that only the dumbest percentage of the diet and fitness world recommended, but it wasn't.

At the time, virtually every single person was on the nutrient timing bandwagon, at least to some extent.

Myself included.

Seriously. I don't know of a single person who wasn't recommending that you consume fast digesting sources of protein and carbs, or consume your post-workout meal within 30 minutes of your workout, or giving some kind of very specific recommendations for what this meal should and should not contain, or expressing the overall importance of these meals and nutrient timing in general, or all of the above.

Everyone was doing it. Yes, even the people who now like to pretend they weren't.

Granted, it was the dumber half that took it to the laughably insane levels that the average person likely grew most aware of, but the smarter half was still there in the background giving their own similar, albeit saner recommendations.

Even a guy like Alan Aragon, who famously had an extremely popular thread on the bodybuilding.com forums that housed his own recommendations.

Hell, it was already 2011 when a guy like Eric Helms (who, by the way, is someone I'd put on my current top five "fitness industry people worth following/trusting" list) wrote in to Alan's monthly

research review asking about this topic and insinuating a still-current belief in at least some of this stuff.

It's safe to say that during this span of time, *everyone* (again, myself included) seemed to agree that nutrient timing was a special thing, and that our pre- and post-workout meals, along with the specifics of how they were designed and when they were consumed, were at the very least a very important factor (the smarter, saner people), and at the very most the single most important factor in the history of the world (the dumber, less-sane people).

PRESENT MISTAKES

Cut to today, and boy have things changed.

The most ironic part of the change is that it was the smarter/saner people from the previous era who helped make this change happen.

I'd put Alan Aragon at the top of that list.

I remember, at some point toward the end of the 2000s, Alan edited his huge thread over at the bodybuilding.com forums that for years prior contained his often quoted and often used pre-/during/post-workout meal recommendations.

What used to contain very specific amounts for protein and carb content and the timing of those meals (30 minute window for the post-workout meal, if I remember correctly) had now become no recommendation at all.

Instead, it became something that was part warning, part reminder and part suggestion to basically take it down a notch with all this nutrient timing craziness.

Alan's primary point was that in the grand scheme of things, nutrient timing wasn't quite as important as everyone had been making it out to be. **And that above all else, what truly matters is our total calorie and macronutrient intake for the day.**

That's by far the #1 thing we need to care about.

Nutrient timing was something that, according to him, should be ranked *distantly below it* on his "Hierarchy of Importance."

Basically, Alan began noticeably downplaying the importance of nutrient timing – especially the precision of the post-workout meal and the "post-workout anabolic window" – for the majority of us normal people with normal diets doing normal workouts with normal goals.

And pretty much everyone else began to follow suit.

And rightfully so.

And in the years since then, Alan has only increased his emphasis on the importance of just hitting your calorie/macronutrient totals for the day and has continued to de-emphasize the importance of nutrient timing, magical anabolic windows and precise pre-/post-workout meal recommendations.

It became a frequent topic of discussion in his monthly research review (aka AARR, which, by the way, is worth every cent) right from issue #1 back in 2008. And as someone who has read every single one of those issues, I can tell you that he has used the available research to make a strong argument in favor of his point of view.

And I'm in full agreement with it.

This all culminated in 2013 with a paper published in the *Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition* (JISSN) co-authored by Alan himself and Brad Schoenfeld called "Nutrient timing revisited: is there a post-exercise anabolic window?" along with a thorough meta-analysis called "The effect of protein timing on muscle strength and hypertrophy" which was co-authored by Alan, Brad and James Krieger.

To say that these papers garnered some attention would be an understatement. That first link has officially become the most viewed article in the entire history of JISSN.

This is both good and bad.

It's good in that it helps show, among other things, that this short and magical "post-workout anabolic window" of time we've all been obsessed with **isn't nearly as short or magical** as everyone has spent the last decade making it out to be. And that much of our obsession with precisely designing and urgently timing these meals is a lot less substantiated than we thought.

This has hopefully helped the people who have been driving themselves insane trying to get their pre- and post-workout meals *just right* (often while neglecting the more important aspects of their diet), or wasting their money on supplements (Surge, waxy maize, etc.) they just don't

need, or being inconveniently anal about slamming down a post-workout shake the second their workouts end.

(And yes, I like to think that was the first time the term "inconveniently anal" has ever been used in any context. I'm honored to have been the one to make it happen.)

So that's the good news.

The bad news, however, is that this is the diet and fitness industry, and the diet and fitness industry is filled with crazy people who are only capable of going from one extreme to the next.

And that's exactly what happened.

So now all of the people who used to be madly in love with the concept of nutrient timing began going in the totally opposite direction. Now everyone has jumped off the bandwagon completely and landed on this new anti-nutrient-timing bandwagon.

> ***Not only is it less important than we all thought, but now it's NOT important at all!***

Not only is it *less* important than we all thought, but now it's NOT important at all!

Not even a little. Ever. For anyone. In any context.

Now you have people making statements like "everyone should just train fasted" or "the post-workout meal is completely and utterly pointless" or "nutrient timing doesn't matter" or "nutrient timing doesn't work" or "there is no benefit to consuming a pre- or post-workout meal" or "you can have your post-workout meal 30 minutes later, 6 hours later or just feel free to skip it altogether" or "the pre- and post-workout meals don't actually do anything" and on and on and on.

Now when someone posts a question about these meals on some fitness forum, the same people who used to answer with hilariously specific recommendations implied to be of the utmost importance now respond with stuff like "lol, who cares… these meals don't even matter."

So what happened here is that people initially spent years overstating the importance of nutrient timing, only to now go on and do a complete 180 to the point where they aren't just understating its importance… they're acting as if it has literally no importance in any capacity whatsoever.

So um… what's the real deal here?

THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION

As with virtually everything in the diet and fitness world, the extremes are wrong and the right place to be is somewhere in the middle. The pre-, during and post-workout meals are no exception.

So are these meals of *any* importance? Yes, definitely.

Are they of *extreme* importance? For most of us, no.

For most of us, nutrient timing is much more of a minor detail of lesser importance in the grand scheme of our overall diet.

However, the point people seem to be missing these days is that **there is a difference between a minor detail of lesser importance and a meaningless detail of no importance**.

The difference, of course, is that the first one is still something that can and will provide some degree of benefit. **Minimal or not, we'll take every benefit we can get.**

But at the same time, we can't lose sight of the minimal nature of it. It's not something that's going to make or break our success. It's not something we need to lose our minds obsessing over. It's not anywhere near the level of importance as something like our total calorie and macronutrient intake.

Not even close.

And anything making it seem as though nutrient timing is as important as or maybe even more important than overall calorie and macronutrient intake is pure bullshit. And horseshit. And catshit. And really just feel free to pick your favorite animals and insert their shit in this very spot.

I really can't stress this enough.

As long as your total calorie and macronutrient intake is what it needs to be each day, the specific manner/timing of how and when it's all consumed becomes *significantly less important*, or, in some cases (i.e., everything we covered in the previous chapter), *not important at all*.

Just like Alan has gone out of his way to make clear over the years, this is comparing minor details to major details.

But taking it to the other extreme and saying that these meals aren't important at all would also be wrong (or maybe just show a lack of reading comprehension), and Alan and Brad themselves will be the first people to tell you this.

In fact, I've seen both Alan and Brad make this very point many times since their stuff got published and people began misinterpreting what it actually says. Here's one such example from Alan, and one from Brad. There are plenty of others.

I've also seen Alan and Brad talk in great detail about this subject, what their published papers legitimately do and do not mean, and what they currently recommend in terms of pre-, during and post-workout nutrition.

Here's the gist of it:

- Under typical circumstances (average person, normal goals, sufficient pre-workout meal within 1-2 hours of the workout, normal workout duration, etc.), the "post-workout window" is larger than the mystical 30 minutes or whatever most people previously believed it to be.
- Under those same typical circumstances, there is no need to consume a super-mega-ultra-fast digesting shake immediately after your workout. You still can – there is still nothing bad about it assuming you like doing it for whatever reason – it's just not the required thing some people think it is. In this scenario, you can actually relax and consume your post-workout meal within 1-2 hours of your workout (assuming you'd rather do that) and everything will still be just fine.
- If the circumstances are NOT typical (for example, training fasted with no pre-workout meal whatsoever, or if the pre-workout meal was consumed 4+ hours before the workout, or if the workout was a lot longer than the common 45-90 minutes it tends to be), then consuming a "fast" post-workout meal as soon as possible afterwards becomes more important and beneficial.
- Nutrient timing is STILL important. Just not the "most important thing in your diet" important. More like "another one of the minor but still meaningful factors of your diet" important.
- You should STILL surround your workouts with protein (and probably carbs as well). This is STILL the right thing to do. It's just that in most cases it doesn't need to be a shake consumed 5 minutes after your workout "or else." However, it still can be if you want to do it. And hell, for all we still know, there may be some *extremely minor* benefit to doing it. We may never know for sure.

- Continuing on that last point, we STILL don't know everything with 100% certainty. Most studies are filled with flaws and limitations. We're essentially just taking our best guesses using the research available and various forms of anecdotal evidence.
- In one instance where Alan and Brad were explaining all of the above, Alan mentioned: "We both surround our training bouts with protein. We both don't wait to get the protein in." Just figured I'd throw that in. (Source: a YouTube video that unfortunately no longer exists.)

THE BIG POINT

So what's the big point we can take away from all of this?

It's pretty simple.

Above all else, make sure your total calorie, protein, fat, carb, fiber, water and micronutrient intake is what it needs to be each day. Regardless of what any fitness guru or supplement company might claim, this is always what matters most.

Everything else (including nutrient timing) is either just a minor detail in comparison, or completely meaningless.

However, proper pre- and post-workout nutrition will still be of some benefit to you and play a small but positive role in your overall results.

However, proper pre- and post-workout nutrition will still be of some benefit to you and play a small but positive role in your overall results.

Is it enough of a role to make or break your success? No.

Is it enough of a role to make up for failing to get the important stuff right? Definitely not.

Is it enough of a role to warrant being a minor detail you continue to pay a sane amount of attention to? Sure.

Really, the best way to explain it is by using the same analogy I used in a 2009 article I wrote about this very topic, which coincidentally is the same analogy I've seen Alan use when discussing his published work. And that is…

Your total calorie and macronutrient intake is the cake.

Nutrient timing is just the icing on that cake.

So, to ensure we cover all bases – real or hypothetical – and ensure we get all possible benefits – significant or insignificant – we should still try to get these meals right.

All clear? Good.

Now let's get to the details…

PRE-WORKOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

Here's what I recommend for the pre-workout meal…

PRE-WORKOUT PROTOCOL #1 (TYPICAL)

Consume a solid food meal containing a nice amount of protein and carbs from whatever sources you prefer about 1-2 hours before your workout.

That's it. Taaadaaa!

Seriously, there is no need to make it any more complicated than that.

What foods should the protein come from? Whatever foods you want. Chicken, turkey, eggs, meat, fish, etc.… it's all perfectly fine.

What foods should the carbs come from? Whatever foods you want. Rice, potatoes, oats, fruit, etc.… it's all perfectly fine.

Can this meal contain a meaningful amount of fat or fiber? If you'd like it to, and it doesn't leave you feeling uncomfortably full during your workouts, and it fits in with your total dietary needs for the day… then sure.

What does a "nice amount of protein and carbs" mean exactly? It means stop sweating the details. It means I don't personally see any need to put a precise number of grams on it. It means I just eat a nice amount of protein and carbs 1-2 hours before my workout. Simple as that.

However, since I know that some people are already losing their minds over my lack of specifics, it's time to include some *optional* guidelines.

Here's my recommended starting point for this meal:

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- **Protein:** 0.15-0.25 g of protein per pound of your current body weight.
  (For example, someone weighing 200 lbs would consume 30-50 g of protein in this meal.)
- **Carbs:** 0.15-0.35 g of carbs per pound of your current body weight.
  (For example, someone weighing 200 lbs would consume 30-70 g of carbs in this meal.)

(NOTE: People who are significantly overweight should use their goal body weight rather than their current body weight.)

Please keep in mind that these numbers are not magical, nor are they set in stone. It's really nothing more than a slightly more specific starting point. A little lower than these amounts is fine. A little higher is fine as well. Whatever fits your preferences.

Again, I personally don't use any exact numbers for this meal myself. I just eat a "nice amount of protein and carbs" in a manner that suits my personal preferences and overall dietary needs for the day, and allows me to feel good (rather than too full) during my workouts.

You should do the same, and feel free to experiment with the specifics of this meal (food choices, quantities, exact timing before the workout, etc.) until you find what suits you best.

Also note that the calories, protein, fat and carbs you consume during this meal all count toward your totals for the day, just like it would with any other meal.

PRE-WORKOUT PROTOCOL #2 (LESS TYPICAL)

Now let's say your pre-workout situation is less typical than it is for most people, and Protocol #1 just can't be done.

For example, let's say you train first thing in the morning and don't actually have 1-2 hours before your workout to eat a pre-workout meal like the previous protocol recommended.

Or maybe you're going to the gym directly from work or school and your schedule just doesn't permit you to have a pre-workout meal 1-2 hours prior.

I recommend using Alan's original recommendations for this type of scenario:

Consume a liquid or easily digested meal (like a whey/dextrose shake) containing a sufficient amount of protein and carbs within 30 minutes before your workout and/or by sipping it during your workout.

What foods should the protein come from? In this case, whey protein powder would be the ideal protein source.

What foods should the carbs come from? This is where dextrose becomes an ideal carb source, though something like Gatorade would work fine as well.

Can this meal contain a meaningful amount of fat or fiber? I wouldn't really recommend it. Since the timing of this meal is so close to your workout, you're going to want to keep it as easily digestible as you can. For this purpose, keeping fat and fiber out of it would probably be a good idea. Trace amounts (like the 1 g of fat in a scoop of protein powder) are absolutely nothing to worry about, though.

What does a "sufficient amount of protein and carbs" mean exactly? I'd say the recommendations from Protocol #1 will be fine as a starting point. Once again, feel free to experiment as needed.

PRE-WORKOUT PROTOCOL #3 (EVEN LESS TYPICAL)

Now, let's say neither Protocol #1 or #2 is relevant to you.

That mainly leaves just one group of people… those who want to **train fasted**.

This was borderline nutritional sacrilege a few years ago, but thanks to the popularity of various intermittent fasting (IF) protocols (such as Martin Berkhan's Leangains and the 5000 others that blatantly ripped it off), fasted training has become a slightly more common occurrence.

I personally spent a few weeks experimenting with fasted training back in 2009 and hated it.

I found I didn't enjoy training fasted, didn't perform as well when training fasted, and really saw no benefit whatsoever to warrant "trying to make it work." So, I don't train fasted.

But that's just me.

What about you?

Well, *with all else being equal*, I don't really view fasted training as being ideal for maximizing training performance.

Can it still work? Of course. My opinion, however, is that it's probably not optimal.

It seems Alan Aragon feels the same way. Here's a direct quote from a 2014 interview he did about nutrient timing after being asked about people who train completely fasted:

"I'm hoping that their primary goal isn't to gain more muscle because they're not doing everything that's hypothetically possible to maximize their training performance. And when you maximize your training performance, you're going to indirectly optimize your rate of gainz." (Source: 7:20 mark of this interview.) (And yes, that's intentionally meant to be "gainz" with a z.)

So, *with all else being equal*, I usually wouldn't recommend fasted training.

Now let's play the fun game of pretending that all else isn't equal. As I've mentioned a few times throughout this book, this is often the case when it comes to a person's diet. Especially a person's *adherence* to that diet.

One example of this is a person who uses some type of IF approach because it fits their preferences and makes it easier for them to sustain their diet and meet their total calorie and macronutrient needs each day (which, again, is always the most important thing).

As part of this hypothetical IF approach, let's say training fasted is something they need or just prefer to be doing and they don't want to stray from that.

That's fine. I will always put overall dietary adherence over the potential minor benefits of anything else… including nutrient timing.

So, in this case, I'd have to say okay… feel free to train fasted if that's what you prefer. However, if possible, try to avoid training completely 100% fasted if you can.

For example, I know Martin Berkhan still recommends consuming some amount of BCAAs or possibly even whey protein before training when using his IF approach. This would be *much better* than training completely fasted.

DURING WORKOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

Alright, so your pre-workout meal has been figured out. How about what happens during your workout? Here's what I recommend…

DURING WORKOUT PROTOCOL #1 (TYPICAL)

I don't recommend any sort of "meal" during your workout. Drink some water.

Simple enough for ya?

Basically, under typical circumstances, where there was a sufficient pre-workout meal anywhere within 2 hours of your workout (like Pre-Workout Protocol #1 would entail), the workout itself isn't insanely long (i.e., 3 hours or more), and there will be some form of post-workout meal coming up at a normal amount of time afterwards, then I don't really see any need at all for consuming anything during your workout besides water.

Why? Because the nutrients you consumed pre-workout will actually *still* be getting released into your bloodstream at this point, thus eliminating the need for any "during workout" nutrition.

Now, if you personally feel like you perform better sipping some kind of diluted protein and/or carb drink during your workout, or want to experiment with something like this and see how it goes… feel free.

For me though, as long as my pre-workout meal is sufficient, I've seen no performance benefit whatsoever to having anything during my workout. So, I just drink water.

For the majority of the population training under similar typical circumstances, that's really all I'd recommend.

DURING WORKOUT PROTOCOL #2 (LESS TYPICAL)

Now, let's say that you're using Pre-Workout Protocol #2 from before.

This again is the protocol for people who are unable to have a normal pre-workout meal 1-2 hours before training.

In this case, the recommendation is to consume some kind of easily digested meal (most likely a protein/carb drink) within 30 minutes before your workout and/or by sipping it during your workout.

So, if you are someone who will be using this protocol, your during workout meal should simply coincide with that pre-workout meal, assuming of course you've chosen to sip it during the workout rather than just finish it before.

POST-WORKOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

And finally, it's time for the last remaining aspect of this little nutrient timing trifecta… the post-workout meal. Here's what I recommend.

THE POST-WORKOUT PROTOCOL

Consume a meal containing a nice amount of protein and carbs from whatever sources you prefer within 1 hour or so after your workout.

That's it. Taaadaaa! Once again, there is no need to make it any more complicated than that.

What foods should the protein come from? Whatever foods you want. And no, they don't have to be "fast." Whey protein powder, chicken, turkey, eggs, beef, fish, etc.… it's all perfectly fine.

What foods should the carbs come from? Whatever foods you want. And no, they don't have to be "fast" either. Rice, potatoes, oats, fruit, dextrose, etc.… it's all perfectly fine.

Can this meal contain a meaningful amount of fat or fiber? If you'd like it to and it fits in with your total dietary needs for the day… sure.

What does a "nice amount of protein and carbs" mean exactly? It means stop sweating the details. It means I don't personally see any need to put a precise number of grams on it. It means I just eat a nice amount of protein and carbs within the hour or so after my workout. Simple as that.

Once again, to ensure no one loses their mind over my lack of specifics, let me throw another batch of *optional* guidelines at you. Here's my recommended starting point for this meal:

- **Protein:** 0.15-0.25 g of protein per pound of your current body weight.
  (For example, someone weighing 200 lbs would consume 30-50 g of protein in this meal.)
- **Carbs:** 0.15-0.35 g of carbs per pound of your current body weight.
  (For example, someone weighing 200 lbs would consume 30-70 g of carbs in this meal.)

(NOTE: People who are significantly overweight should use their goal body weight rather than their current body weight.)

Just like before, please keep in mind that these numbers are not magical, nor are they set in stone. They're really nothing more than a slightly more specific starting point. A little lower than these amounts is fine. A little higher is fine as well. Whatever fits your preferences.

And again note that the calories, protein, fat and carbs you consume during this meal all count toward your totals for the day, just like they would with any other meal.

TIMING THE POST-WORKOUT MEAL

You may have noticed that there is just one post-workout protocol. This is because I don't really have another set of recommendations for different scenarios. The guidelines outlined above apply in pretty much all cases.

The only *minor* adjustments I'd *maybe* make would be to the specific timing of this meal.

And the basis of those minor adjustments would be the fact that **the pre-workout meal dictates the timing (and really overall importance) of the post-workout meal**.

So, for example, in a **less typical scenario** where you are training fasted, or maybe your pre-workout meal was 4+ hours before your workout, or your workout itself was significantly longer than is typical… that's when I'd recommend consuming your post-workout meal as soon after your workout as you can.

If there was ever a time or a place where "slamming down a post-workout shake immediately after training" would be remotely necessary, this would be as close as it gets.

HOWEVER, in a **more typical scenario** where your pre-workout meal was sufficient and your workout was a normal length, then guess what? The nutrients you consumed pre-workout are actually *still* being released into your bloodstream at this point, meaning there is now no legitimate urgency for consuming a post-workout meal ASAP.

So when should you ideally consume it under these much more typical circumstances? I think shooting for anywhere within 1 hour or so after your workout would be a good idea for most people.

Can you wait longer than that? Yeah, *probably*. And while it is certainly possible that consuming your post-workout meal 2 hours after training could be equally as effective as consuming it within 1 hour, I'd still rather see it consumed within 1 hour if possible.

Why? Just to err on the safe side and get whatever (hypothetical) tiny benefits there may be from consuming it slightly sooner rather than slightly later.

Can you still slam down a post-workout shake immediately after your workout anyway in this scenario? Sure you can. There is absolutely no need to do this, but that doesn't mean you can't do it anyway if you happen to prefer it for whatever reason.

I personally still sometimes consume a post-workout shake in the car on the ride home from the gym if it suits my needs that day (e.g., if I'm not going straight home and it will be a while before I'm able to have a normal meal). Otherwise, I just have a normal solid food meal containing a nice amount of protein and carbs (grilled chicken, white or basmati rice, and vegetables is my go-to meal of choice at this time) when I get home.

Once again, there is absolutely nothing special or more effective about any of this. It's just what I like to do because it suits my personal needs and dietary preferences. You should do whatever suits yours.

And I think that pretty much covers everything.

Just in case I unintentionally lost or confused you at any point during this chapter, I just want to quickly bring it all home with a one sentence summary that will hopefully make everything as clear as possible.

Ready? Here it is…

Ensure that your total calorie and macronutrient intake for the day is what it needs to be, and then surround your workouts with some protein and carbs.

We can make it much more complicated than that (and for the purpose of being as thorough as possible, I guess I just kinda did), but in the end, this is how simple it truly is.

And just like that, any remotely beneficial aspect of nutrient timing has been designed for superior fat loss.

CHAPTER 12

Refeeds, Calorie Cycling And Diet Breaks

REFEEDS, CALORIE CYCLING AND DIET BREAKS

So, at this point, you've set up every meaningful aspect of your diet.

From top to bottom, major detail to minor detail, you've designed the diet that is going to allow you to reach your fat loss goals as quickly, easily and effectively as realistically possible, and make you the most likely to permanently maintain them.

Specifically…

- **Calorie intake** and **deficit size** have been adjusted to produce a **rate of weight loss** that will not only strike the perfect balance between effective and (still relatively) fast fat loss, but also prevent or greatly minimize the various problems that come about (e.g., muscle loss, sustainability issues, etc.) and all of the survival mechanisms that kick in due to the human body fighting back against your attempt to lose fat (e.g., hormonal issues, metabolic issues, etc.).
- **Protein intake** has been adjusted to prevent muscle loss, control hunger and appetite, and increase TEF.
- **Fat intake** has been adjusted for optimal hormone production, sufficient omega-3 intake, and satiety.
- **Carb intake** has been adjusted for optimal training performance and recovery, sleep quality, dietary compliance, overall dietary happiness, and avoiding unnecessary restrictions that are only detrimental to your success.
- **Fiber intake** has been adjusted for hunger and appetite control.
- **Water intake** has been adjusted for optimal hydration, satiety and preventing unnecessary water retention.
- **Micronutrient intake** has been adjusted to prevent deficiencies and provide optimal amounts of everything the human body needs for overall health and function, including nutrients that can have an indirect effect on your fat loss results.

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- **Meal frequency**, **eating style**, **food choices** and **diet organization** have all been adjusted to suit your personal dietary needs/preferences AND eliminate the countless unnecessary, unproven and just-plain-stupid things people often force themselves to do within their diet, thus greatly increasing the likelihood of adherence to everything on this list.
- **Pre-** and **post-workout nutrition** have been adjusted for optimal training performance and recovery.
- *Everything* on this list has been adjusted for **ideal mental and physical health** as well.

Basically, throughout this book thus far, we've adjusted every single dietary factor in a way that will help to combat "The 5 Problems" we covered earlier and the many sub-problems that come along with them.

This includes things like…

- Problems with short-term and long-term adherence and sustainability.
- Increased hunger and appetite.
- Metabolic slowdown.
- Negative hormonal changes (involving leptin, ghrelin, testosterone, cortisol, thyroid, and so on, all of which cause/contribute to the other problems on this list).
- Muscle loss.
- Strength loss.
- Reductions in training performance and recovery.
- Decreased NEAT.
- Increased lethargy.
- Worsened mood/increased irritability.
- Worsened sleep quality.
- Reduced libido and sexual function.
- Increased awareness of food.
- And more.

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We have now taken every adjustable dietary factor at our disposal and adjusted them with the problems on this list in mind.

That is… *every dietary factor except one*.

You see, there is one remaining "adjustable dietary factor at our disposal" that we have not yet adjusted, discussed or really even mentioned at all.

It's a factor that most people trying to lose fat would never even consider as being a possible factor to adjust in the first place.

Hell, it's a factor that some people might be scared to adjust even after showing them that doing so will be beneficial to their progress.

So… what factor am I talking about exactly?

What final dietary factor can we adjust to improve the various negative physiological and psychological effects that come about as a result of being in a caloric deficit?

It's actually pretty obvious.

If being in a caloric deficit is what causes all of these problems to come about, one way to "solve" them is by **strategically NOT being in a deficit**.

Intrigued?

Let me explain…

STRATEGICALLY PAUSING THE DEFICIT

No matter how well we set up every aspect of our overall fat loss program, **the problems on that list from a minute ago will always be present to some extent simply as a result of being in a prolonged caloric deficit**.

That deficit – in and of itself and regardless of everything else – is *always* going to be viewed as a "bad thing" by your body.

It's *always* going to see it as you potentially being at risk of starving to death, so the biological survival response to fight back and prevent it is *always* going to kick in to some degree.

And the degree to which your body fights back will progressively increase the leaner you begin to get, the closer you come to reaching your goals, and the longer you remain in a caloric deficit for the purpose of making this all happen.

Now, sure, everything we've adjusted so far (and will continue to adjust throughout the rest of this book) has been done to greatly lessen the degree of impact that this all has on us and our results.

But, no matter how well we do that, *much of it is still going to happen anyway*.

That is just the unfortunate reality of being in a prolonged caloric deficit. Your body is *always* going to fight back against it at some point.

And that brings us to our next obvious question… **is there anything else we can do about it**?

The answer is yes.

THE "STARVATION SIGNAL"

Earlier in this book, I told you that your body only cares about one thing: your survival.

I also explained that your body has no idea if you're in a deficit because you're trying to lose some fat to improve the way you look and feel, or because you no longer have access to a sufficient amount of food and are in serious danger of starving to death.

So, with your survival always being it's top/only priority, your body responds the same way to both scenarios: *by doing everything it can to stop that deficit from existing*.

Which is to say that **a caloric deficit is *always* going to be a signal to your body that you are in danger of starving to death**. Even though that's not actually true, that's the only way a deficit is ever going to be perceived by your body. As a "***starvation signal***."

And it's this starvation signal that makes all of your body's "internal alarms" go off… which then causes all of its adaptive survival mechanisms to go into action… which then causes all of those problems on the list from before to occur… which then go on to make losing fat as hard and sucky for you as possible because your body is fighting to prevent the fat loss you're trying to make happen.

That's the bad news.

The good news, however, **is that the *opposite* signal has the *opposite* effect**.

THE "FED SIGNAL"

What I mean is, coming out of the deficit by going back up to your maintenance level or into a surplus essentially sends an "all-clear, everything-is-fine, nothing-to-worry-about-here, we-have-plenty-of-food, we-are-totally-not-in-danger-of-starving-to-death" signal.

And it's this "fed signal" that shuts off all of those internal alarms and reverses all of those adaptive survival mechanisms.

Confused?

Think of it this way.

Imagine a wall of switches. The adjustable kind. You know, like a dimmable light switch that can be raised or lowered to change how much light is given off.

Imagine one switch for each of the ways your body can fight back against your attempt to lose fat.

When you are at your maintenance level or in a surplus, your body thinks everything is fine. You clearly have all of the food you need and are not in any danger of starvation. Rather, you are in a "fed" state, and your body has no reason to fight back.

So, it keeps those switches at the very bottom – in the *off* position – giving off no light whatsoever.

When you then go into a deficit, those switches slowly start to turn on and gradually begin moving upwards the longer you remain in that deficit and the leaner you begin to get.

As those switches continue to rise and the light gets brighter and brighter, your body is going to be fighting back harder and harder… thus worsening all of those associated problems for you.

But, *here's the thing*.

When you come out of that deficit and return to maintenance or a surplus, those switches gradually begin to go back down toward the off position.

Meaning, once your body starts getting that "fed signal" again, it starts fighting back less and less, and all of those associated problems are lessened right along with it. If you were to then remain out of a deficit long enough, those switches would turn off completely.

With me so far? Cool.

TRICKING YOUR BODY WITH A TEMPORARY "FED SIGNAL"

Now, while this certainly sounds interesting and potentially beneficial, we have ourselves an obvious dilemma.

In order to lose fat, we need to be IN a caloric deficit. But, in order to convince our bodies that we are "fed" so those switches can be lowered, we need to be OUT of a caloric deficit.

So, what the hell are we supposed to do? Simple.

We *temporarily* and *periodically* come out of our deficit to send the "fed" signal we need, and then resume the deficit again right after that.

See, just like how your body doesn't know if you're in a deficit because you're trying to lose fat or because you're starving to death, your body also doesn't know if you're out of a deficit because everything is fine and you're now permanently done being in a deficit, or because you're just tricking it into thinking you are by temporarily coming out of it.

And that's something we're going to take full advantage of.

Basically, you are going to strategically pause your caloric deficit for a period of time that is short and infrequent enough to not interfere significantly with your fat loss progress, but still sufficient enough to send your body the "fed" signal it requires in order for those switches to be turned down and the various negative effects of being in a prolonged deficit to be lessened and/or reversed.

This, in turn, helps us to avoid the problems that commonly prevent people from reaching their fat loss goals, thus greatly improving our likelihood of success.

The only question is, how are we going to do this? There are actually three different ways:

1. **Refeeds**
2. **Calorie Cycling**
3. **Diet Breaks**

HOW THEY WORK: YET ANOTHER FUN METAPHOR

If you liked my light switch metaphor, you'll love this one!

Think of a bathtub. Like most bathtubs, imagine there is a drain somewhere inside it with a stopper in it so the water cannot go down.

When you are at maintenance or in a surplus, that bathtub is empty. But, when you go into a deficit, it starts to fill up with water. The longer you remain in a deficit, the more filled that bathtub gets.

And the more filled it gets, the harder and suckier everything is for you and your ability to continue losing fat (hunger is getting worse and worse; metabolic rate is slowing; strength and performance are decreasing; your mood, sleep quality and libido are going to crap, etc.).

Now imagine you are in a deficit for a while, and the water is continuing to fill up that bathtub. A little more every day, every week, every month. Eventually, that bathtub is going to be so full that it looks like it might overflow. And then… *it does*.

And when that happens, the diet equivalent happens.

For some people, that could mean a massive binge-eating session takes place. Others reach their maximum level of crankiness and annoyance. Others go off their diet for an extended period of time and regain some of the fat they just lost. Others go off their diet completely and regain *all* of the fat they just lost and potentially even more. Others somehow manage to push themselves through it and unwillingly accept the consequences (e.g., unnecessary amounts of muscle loss).

This point of metaphorical "overflowing" is basically the breaking point people reach while attempting to lose fat that ultimately causes them to fail.

But that's where methods like **refeeds**, **calorie cycling** and **diet breaks** come into play.

Go back to that same scenario of a bathtub overflowing.

Imagine now that this time, before reaching that overflow point, you preemptively lift the stopper and let some water drain out. Then, you put the stopper back in and let the process continue.

So… it starts to fill up with water… you lift the stopper to let some drain out… and then repeat.

You see that part in the middle?

The temporary, occasional lifting of the stopper that prevents it from overflowing?

That's how these methods work.

THE DEGREE OF BENEFIT

In terms of effectiveness, **the longer you are out of a deficit, the more significant the benefits are going to be**.

Just like that bathtub… the more water you let drain out before putting the stopper back in, the more beneficial it is for preventing an overflow.

The same is true for preventing that dietary breaking point from occurring.

So, for example, being out of the deficit for one day will have a much smaller physiological and psychological benefit compared to being out of the deficit for multiple days. And being out of the deficit for multiple days will have a much smaller benefit compared to being out of the deficit for multiple weeks. And so on.

Simply put, the longer you pause your deficit, the more those switches are going to be lowered and the more those survival mechanisms are going to be reversed.

Let's now take a look at the three methods for making it happen…

REFEEDS

First up… refeeds.

WHAT IS A REFEED?

A refeed can last anywhere from 5 hours to several days depending on who you ask, but in most cases, a refeed refers to a **single day** of purposely (and *strategically*) overeating during a period of fat loss so that you are temporarily out of a deficit.

That could mean going back up to your maintenance level, or into a surplus.

After that 24-hour period is over, you go back to being in a deficit again.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

As I explained a minute ago, the longer you are out of a deficit, the larger the benefits are going to be.

Which means, with just a single-day refeed, the benefits won't be nearly significant enough to completely shut off any of those switches or fully empty that bathtub.

However, it can still be significant enough to serve some useful purposes and make the process of losing fat suck a little less, feel a little easier and go a little better than it otherwise would have.

Specifically, a single-day refeed will…

- **Replenish muscle glycogen stores**, which will improve strength, training performance, and recovery… thereby improving your ability to maintain (or, in some cases, *build*) muscle. In addition, a fun bonus effect of refilled glycogen stores is that it usually improves the visual appearance of your muscles by making them temporarily look "fuller" rather than "flatter."
- **Provide a nice mental break** by giving you a day where you are allowed to eat more food after a period of time where you've purposely been eating less. And, come on, who doesn't like eating more food? Especially while they're losing fat? It's fun, it makes us happy, and it gives us something to look forward to in addition to our continued progress. Psychologically speaking, this can play a huge beneficial role in diet adherence.

- **Serve as a day when the "switches" aren't going any higher.** Years ago, when the concept of refeeds was first being made popular by people like Lyle McDonald (who is, by far, the guy most responsible for bringing refeeds to the attention of the diet world), some claimed that a single-day refeed would be capable of significantly reversing many of those hormonal switches (specifically leptin), thus having a large positive effect on things like hunger (reducing it) and metabolic rate (increasing it). More recently, however, most evidence-based people (including Lyle himself) agree that a single day of being out of a deficit is unlikely to be long enough to have much of a meaningful impact in this regard. Does that make a single-day refeed completely useless for this purpose? Not quite. Because, while it probably isn't going to have much effect on reversing the various hormonal/metabolic adaptations of being in a prolonged deficit, a single-day refeed still serves as a day where you are NOT in a deficit. Meaning, it's still a full day where you are, at the very least, *preventing those switches from going any higher*. Or, to use my other wonderful metaphor, it's like you're shutting off the water flowing into that bathtub for a day. And that, combined with the previously mentioned refilled glycogen stores and mental break, are likely to be the true benefits of a single-day refeed.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Before I get into my recommendations, it's important to keep in mind that a refeed is a day of *strategic, planned overeating*. This is **NOT** a cheat day, or a free day, or a day where you get to eat as much as you want, or a day where you don't pay any attention to how much you're eating, or a day where you lose your self-control and binge.

This is a day just like any other day. There are still specific calorie and macronutrient targets to hit. There are still dietary guidelines to follow. Self-control is still required. The one big difference is that you are going to be eating a little more than you usually do for the purpose of getting the benefits it provides.

Now here's how to do it…

To do a single-day refeed, **increase your calorie intake so that you are at your maintenance level or in a small surplus up to 250 calories above maintenance for one day**.

Your **protein** intake should stay the same. **Fat** intake should be decreased to the low end of the recommended ideal fat intake range, which is **15%** of your total calorie intake. And **carbs**? *They should be increased*.

In fact, **carbs will be the macronutrient that provides ALL of the extra calories** you need to eat to get back up to your maintenance level or slightly above it for this refeed to happen.

Why carbs? Three reasons. First, carbs have been shown (studies here and here) to have the biggest positive impact on leptin (although again, a single-day refeed isn't going to have much hormonal impact). Second, it is carbs that are needed to refill glycogen stores. And third, carbs are yummy, and eating more yummy food = happiness.

AN EXAMPLE REFEED DAY

So, what does this look like in the real world? Here's an example setup for an example person…

- Let's say some example person weighs 200 lbs and has a maintenance level of **2500** calories (again, these are all completely random example numbers).
- Let's also say they previously decided to create a deficit of 20% below their maintenance level. Since 20% of 2500 is 500, we know that they've been eating **2000** calories per day to make their ideal rate of weight loss happen. Cool.
- In order for a refeed day to be a refeed day, their calorie intake needs to be increased to their maintenance level or slightly over it. To keep things simple, let's say this example person decides to go up to their maintenance level, which is **2500**. To do that, they would need to consume **500** calories more than they regularly do (since they've regularly been eating 2000 calories).
- From there, let's say they previously set their protein intake to an even 1 g of protein per pound of body weight. Since they weigh 200 lbs, that's **200 g** of protein per day, which accounts for 800 calories from protein (200 x 4 calories per gram of protein = 800). Since protein intake should stay the same during a refeed, they will eat 200 g of protein just like they already do.
- Next up is fat. Let's pretend they previously set their fat intake to somewhere between 20-30% of their total calorie intake. For a refeed day, they want to bring that down to 15%. So… 15% of 2500 is 375. 375 divided by 9 calories per gram of fat is **42 g** of fat that day.
- Finally, carbs. Since 800 calories are coming from protein and 375 calories are coming from fat, we have a total of 1175 calories accounted for. Since this example person is going to eat 2500 calories on this day, that leaves 1325 calories not yet accounted for (2500 - 1175 =

1325). All of those calories will come from carbs. So… 1325 divided by 4 calories per gram of carbs is **331 g** of carbs that day. Mmmm, tasty.

You'd simply follow these same steps using your own relevant numbers.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD A SINGLE-DAY REFEED TAKE PLACE?

In most cases, **a single-day refeed should happen once every 1-3 weeks**.

Yes, that's a fairly broad range, but that's because different people need and benefit from slightly different things at different points in the fat loss process.

When it comes to refeeds, this is primarily dependent on three factors: 1) how long the person has been in a deficit (the longer it's been, the more beneficial refeeds become), 2) what their current body fat percentage is (the leaner you are and the less fat you have to lose, the more beneficial refeeds become), and 3) how they *feel* – as in how much a person mentally and/or physically *feels* like it's needed (even with the other two factors being equal, this can still vary from person to person).

To make this even clearer, here are two examples of how this would go in the real world…

1. Imagine someone who is in the very early stages of being in a deficit, and/or someone with a lot of fat to lose, and/or someone with a higher body fat percentage, and/or someone who is obese, and/or someone whose strength and performance in the gym is holding up well, and/or someone who is making good fat loss progress and feels just fine overall. **This would be the type of person who needs less frequent refeeds. For example, two or three times a month.**

2. Now imagine someone who might be further into their fat loss diet, and/or someone who has a lesser amount of fat to lose, and/or someone who is at a lower body fat percentage, and/or someone who is having issues with strength and performance in the gym, and/or someone who simply feels the effects of their body fighting back more than they would like to (hunger, mood, lethargy, sleep, awareness of food, etc.). **This would be the type of person who needs more frequent refeeds. For example, once a week.**

(Also note that people in the first group will eventually be in the second group. Meaning, as you spend more time in a deficit, get leaner and become closer to reaching your goal, the frequency of refeeds should increase because the need for doing so will be increasing as well.)

So, basically, here's the recommendation in a nutshell: throw in a single-day refeed once every 1-3 weeks. Base exactly how often you do it within that range on a combination of commonsense reasoning (e.g., someone with 50-100 lbs to lose needs it less frequently than someone with 10-20 lbs to lose), how your strength levels are holding up in the gym, and how you're feeling both physically and mentally overall.

No need to make it any more complicated than that.

ADJUSTING THE OTHER DAYS TO BALANCE THINGS OUT

In a week that you have a refeed day, **you'll need to slightly lower your calorie intake on the other six days to make the total weekly deficit the same as it would have been if you didn't do a refeed**.

Here's an example of how to do this. It's easy.

Let's use the same example person's diet we just used two pages ago. They had a maintenance level of 2500 calories, a 500-calorie deficit (so they were eating 2000 calories per day to be in their ideal deficit), and were going up to 2500 calories on their refeed day.

A daily 500 calorie deficit would give them a total weekly deficit of 3500 calories (500 x 7 days in a week = 3500). That was their intended weekly deficit when they set up their diet.

But, if one of those days is now a refeed day where they consume 2500 calories instead of the 2000 they are eating on the other six days, their total weekly deficit is now going to be 3000 calories (500 x 6 days = 3000 calories) rather than 3500.

This still represents a significant net deficit for the week, **so they will still lose fat just fine**.

That's not an issue at all.

However, the total net deficit is now *slightly* smaller than it would have been due to the refeed day, which means the amount of body fat they lose that week will be *slightly* less than it otherwise would have been. (Make sure you're placing extra emphasis on the word "slightly" when reading that.)

To fix this, they would first need to realize that the difference between their intended total weekly deficit of 3500 calories and the total weekly deficit of 3000 calories they'd have due to the refeed day is 500 calories.

From there, **it's just a matter of making up that difference on the other six days**.

How? By dividing 500 by six and getting 83. Which means, they'd simply eat 83 fewer calories on the other six days (in this example, that would be 1917 instead of 2000) to fully counterbalance the extra refeed calories.

In doing so, their total weekly deficit will now be the same 3500 it would have been if they didn't have a refeed day, which means their rate of fat loss will be the same as it would have been as well.

WHAT DAY SHOULD THE REFEED BE ON?

While any day of the week would be okay, it would be most ideal to do a refeed on a day that will allow you to take advantage of the refilled muscle glycogen stores it's going to provide.

Since refilled glycogen stores will have a beneficial effect on strength and training performance, **having your refeed on a weight training day (perhaps the day of your hardest workout) would be a smart choice**. If you happen to train really early in the morning, having the refeed on the previous day might be more beneficial. Feel free to experiment.

Now, even though this is usually the ideal way to schedule a refeed from a physiological standpoint, and it's the default way I'd recommend scheduling it, you are not required to do it this way if you have a good reason for doing it on another day instead.

For example, let's say you have a big family dinner every Sunday. Maybe someone cooks. Maybe you go out. Whatever. Wouldn't it be convenient if that happened to be your refeed day… even if it wasn't a weight training day? Would having the day when you're strategically eating more calories fall on the same day that you're having a big meal with your family make you… *happy*? If so, then feel free to refeed on that day.

It may be a little less ideal from a physiological standpoint, but it's probably going to be more ideal from a psychological standpoint… and that's even more important. So, it's totally your choice.

EXPECT SHORT-TERM BODY WEIGHT CHANGES TO OCCUR

Just one final thing worth noting before moving on to calorie cycling.

And that is, you can expect to see a completely **normal** and completely **temporary** increase in body weight in the day(s) following a single-day refeed.

Do not worry. Do not freak out. Do not give the slightest crap about it.

I promise you, this is NOT body fat being gained. I will gladly pinky-swear on this fact if you need me to.

This *temporary* weight gain is simply a combination of some ***temporary* water weight**, ***temporarily* replenished muscle glycogen stores**, and the ***temporary* weight of additional food in your stomach waiting to be digested**.

This kind of thing will happen every time you consume more calories/carbs than you usually do, and doing so for the purpose of a single-day refeed is no different.

This is a big part of why I recommend weighing yourself every day and only focusing on the weekly averages over a span of 2-4 weeks. Doing so prevents these kinds of normal short-term fluctuations from interfering with your progress tracking.

So, long story short, expect to see a small gain in body weight after doing a refeed.

And then, when you see it… *relax*.

It's nothing to care about at all and it's supposed to happen (remember, we *want* that glycogen replenishment). Once you return to your normal diet with your normal calorie and carb intake, your weight will go back down to what it previously was before the refeed (and of course, continue to gradually go downwards as you continue losing fat).

CALORIE CYCLING

Next up… calorie cycling.

WHAT IS CALORIE CYCLING?

In the most basic sense, **calorie cycling during fat loss is a method of using *multiple* refeed days over the course of a week**. With a single-day refeed, you have, at most, just one day per week where you are out of a deficit. With calorie cycling, you have more.

How many more exactly, you ask? I've seen as few as two and as many as five being used successfully. However, based on the existing research and my own firsthand experience and observation, I've found **three days** per week to be the sweet spot.

And that's what we're going to be using here.

So, from this point on, we can define calorie cycling as three days per week (every week) of purposely (and *strategically*) overeating during a period of fat loss so that you are temporarily out of a deficit.

Just like with a single-day refeed, that could mean going back up to your maintenance level or into a surplus on those days.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Earlier in this chapter, I explained that the longer you are out of a deficit, the larger the benefits are going to be.

Which means that the benefits of using calorie cycling to have multiple refeed days each week will be similar to the benefits of a single-day refeed… *only better and more significant* because it involves spending more time out of the deficit.

Specifically, calorie cycling will…

- **Replenish muscle glycogen stores multiple times throughout the week**, which will improve strength, training performance and recovery more so than a single-day refeed would. In addition, our ability to maintain muscle (or, in some cases, *build* more of it) will be improved as well, often leading to enhanced calorie partitioning (less fat, more muscle). And yes, the fun

bonus visual effect of having your muscles look "fuller" rather than "flatter" will be present as well.

- **Provide a nice mental break** by giving you multiple days throughout each week where you are allowed to eat more food during a period of time where you're purposely eating less. And who doesn't love the idea of having three days a week where you get to eat more calories/carbs than you usually do? Just like with a single-day refeed, this can play a beneficial psychological role and help with overall diet adherence.

- **Lower some of those "switches" and reverse some of the effects of the body fighting back.** Compared to a single-day refeed, a calorie cycling approach that involves three days per week of being out of a deficit will be capable of reversing the various hormonal/metabolic effects of being in a prolonged deficit (e.g., decreased leptin) to a more meaningful and beneficial degree. Which means that hunger will be reduced to a more substantial degree and metabolic rate will be increased to a more substantial degree.

Basically, going back to my metaphor from earlier, calorie cycling allows us to lift the stopper more often and let more water drain out of the bathtub.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Each week, we're going to have two different types of days. Here are the guidelines for each…

- **Three Maintenance/Surplus Days**
  On these three days, you will increase your calorie intake so that you are at your **maintenance level (or in a tiny surplus up to 150 calories above maintenance)**. Just like with a single-day refeed, your **protein** intake should stay the same as it usually is, **fat** intake should be decreased to the low end of the recommended ideal fat intake range (which is **15%** of your total calorie intake), and **carbs** should fill in all of the remaining calories needed to get your calorie intake as high as it needs to be (because, again, carbs have the biggest positive impact on leptin, are needed to refill glycogen stores, and are just plain yummy).

- **Four Deficit Days**
  On these other four days, you will follow the usual guidelines laid out earlier in this book. But, you will now need to spread your full total weekly deficit out over these four days. Yup, just like how you had to counterbalance for a single-day refeed by slightly decreasing your calorie intake on the other six days. This is the exact same thing, except now you have three refeed days, which means you will have to decrease your calorie intake a little more on these other

four days to balance it out and ensure that the same total weekly deficit (and intended rate of fat loss) is there.

As far as scheduling goes, my same recommendations for a single-day refeed apply here as well.

That being, **the ideal placement of the three maintenance/surplus days would be on your weight training days** to best take advantage of the refilled muscle glycogen stores and the strength, performance and recovery boost it will provide. **Your four deficit days would then be placed on your rest days.**

As you'll see in a later chapter, my preference is to have three weight training workouts per week and four rest days per week when the goal is fat loss (I'll explain why in that chapter). This means my calorie cycling recommendations will fit perfectly with my weight training recommendations in that you have three workout days and three maintenance/surplus days… and four rest days and four deficit days.

That's not a coincidence. It's all designed to work out this way.

In addition, I have always found there to be some small degree of calorie partitioning benefit (i.e., improved ability to lose fat without losing muscle) with this type of setup – where you have more calories on your training days and less calories on your rest days.

I actually recommend a similar approach in *Superior Muscle Growth* (SMG) – where the goal is building muscle without gaining fat – for this very reason.

Now, if you're looking for me to show you a study that supports this, that's not going to happen. This isn't because it's not true, it's just because no such study exists.

One thing I can tell you though is that I know of many other people at a variety of levels (the average guy or girl just trying to lose fat, build muscle and look awesome; coaches; athletes; natural bodybuilders; figure competitors; fitness models, etc.) who have seen the exact same thing.

Consider it a potential added perk to this approach.

(Note that if you happen to train really early in the morning, moving the maintenance/surplus days to the day prior to a weight training workout might be more beneficial. Feel free to experiment.)

AN EXAMPLE OF A CALORIE CYCLING SETUP

So, what does this look like in the real world? Here's an example setup for an example person…

- Let's say some example person weighs 200 lbs and has a maintenance level of **2500** calories (as usual, these are all completely random example numbers).
- Let's also say they previously decided to create a deficit of 20% below their maintenance level. Since 20% of 2500 is **500**, we know that they would need to eat **2000** calories per day to make their ideal rate of weight loss happen. Cool.
- Since they have a daily 500 calorie deficit, that would give them a total weekly deficit of **3500** calories (500 x 7 days in a week = 3500). That's their intended weekly deficit to make their ideal rate of weight loss occur. Awesome.
- To use this calorie cycling approach, their calorie intake will need to be increased to their maintenance level (or within 150 calories above it) on three days each week. To keep things simple, let's say this example person decides to go up to their maintenance level, which is **2500**. To do that, they would need to consume an additional **500** calories on those three days (since they ate 2000 calories a day to create their deficit).
- Since they will now be eating 500 extra calories three days per week – an amount that brings them up to their maintenance level on those days – they are now left with a total weekly deficit of only **2000** calories instead of their intended weekly deficit of 3500 (500 x 4 days in a deficit = 2000).
- To counterbalance this, they would first need to realize that the difference between their intended total weekly deficit of 3500 calories and the total weekly deficit of 2000 calories they'd have due to the three days at maintenance is **1500** calories.
- From there, it's just a simple matter of making up that difference by lowering the four deficit days a little more. How? By dividing 1500 by four and getting **375**. Which means that they'd simply eat 375 fewer calories on their four deficit days. In this example, that would be 1625 (2000 - 375 = 1625).
- Now this example person will be eating **1625 calories on their four rest days** and **2500 calories on their three weight training days**. Their total weekly deficit, total weekly calorie intake, and weekly rate of fat loss will still be the same as it would have been if they consumed 2000 calories per day every day… only now they are cycling their calorie intake so

that they are in a deficit on their rest days and at maintenance on their training days… thus getting the various benefits I listed earlier.

- As for macronutrients, let's say they previously set their protein intake to an even 1 g of protein per pound of body weight. Since they weigh 200 lbs, that's **200 g** of protein per day, which accounts for 800 calories from protein (200 x 4 calories per gram of protein = 800). Since protein intake should stay the same regardless of which day it is, they will eat 200 g of protein every day.

- Next up is fat. Let's pretend they previously set their fat intake to 25% of their total calorie intake. **For their four rest days**, they would need to figure out that 25% of 1625 is 406. 406 divided by 9 calories per gram of fat gives them **45 g** of fat on those days. **On their three training days**, fat intake should be 15% of their total calorie intake. So, they'd figure out that 15% of 2500 is 375. 375 divided by 9 calories per gram of fat gives them **42 g** of fat on those days.

- Finally, carbs. **On their four rest days**, they have 800 calories coming from protein and 406 calories coming from fat, which gives them a total of 1206 calories accounted for. Since this example person is going to eat 1625 calories on those days, that leaves 419 calories not yet accounted for (1625 - 1206 = 419). All of those calories will come from carbs. So, 419 divided by 4 calories per gram of carbs is **105 g** of carbs on those days. **On their three weight training days**, they'd repeat these same steps (800 + 375 = 1175 calories from protein and fat… 2500 - 1175 = 1325 calories left over for carbs… 1325 divided by 4 calories per gram of carbs = 331 g) and determine that they'd eat **331 g** of carbs on those days.

So, this example person would have a weekly calorie cycling setup that breaks down like this…

Their Four Rest Days/Deficit Days

Calories: 1625

Protein: 200 g

Fat: 45 g

Carbs: 105 g

Their Three Training Days/Maintenance Days

Calories: 2500

Protein: 200 g

Fat: 42 g

Carbs: 331 g

Once again, this is all based on random example numbers. You would need to repeat these same steps using your own relevant numbers.

EXPECT (EXTRA) BODY WEIGHT FLUCTUATIONS TO OCCUR

Just like with a single-day refeed, you can expect to see a completely **normal** and completely **temporary** increase in body weight on the day(s) following a maintenance/surplus day.

In fact, now that you have three higher calorie/carb days each week cycled with four lower calorie/carb deficit days, your daily body weight will be up and down even more so than usual.

But, just like before… *do not give the slightest crap about it*.

I will once again pinky-swear on the fact that this is NOT body fat being gained/lost/gained/lost. It's just the same combination of ***temporary* water weight**, ***temporarily* replenished muscle glycogen stores**, and the ***temporary* weight of additional food in your stomach waiting to be digested** that we talked about earlier.

That's what's responsible for these daily changes.

And again… this is part of why I recommend weighing yourself every day and only focusing on the weekly averages over a span of 2-4 weeks. Doing so prevents these kinds of normal day-to-day fluctuations from interfering with your progress tracking.

As an added bonus, the fact that you will be using this same calorie cycling approach on the same days every week means that this body weight inconsistency will *consistently* occur each week. Meaning, while the daily changes may look abnormal at first, they will become your new normal.

So, long story short, expect to see some extra fluctuations in your daily body weight when implementing this (or really, any) calorie cycling approach. It's completely normal and nothing to worry about at all.

DIET BREAKS

And finally… diet breaks.

WHAT IS A DIET BREAK?

A single-day refeed was one day of being out of a deficit.

Calorie cycling was multiple days (three) of being out of a deficit.

Can you guess where this is going now?

Basically, **a diet break is a consistent 1-2 week period** of purposely (and *strategically*) overeating during a period of fat loss so that you are temporarily out of a deficit.

After that 7-14 day break is over, the deficit is resumed.

Unlike the single-day refeed or calorie cycling approach, however – both of which involved going back up to your maintenance level OR into a small surplus on those days – **I only recommend going back up to your maintenance level during a diet break**. No surplus.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Once again, the longer you are out of a deficit, the larger the benefits are going to be.

So while the benefits of a single-day refeed were *nice*, and the benefits of a three-day calorie cycling approach were even *nicer*, the benefits of a full 1-2 week diet break will be the *nicerest* of all. (Yes, that's a technical term.)

Specifically, a diet break will…

- **Replenish muscle glycogen stores**, which will improve strength and training performance more so than the previous two methods while also providing a comparatively larger recovery boost, thus putting you in an even better position to maintain muscle (or, in some cases, *build* more of it). In fact, during this time, it's not uncommon for a person to regain a small amount of the muscle they may have unintentionally lost during the previous weeks of fat loss. And once again, if your muscles have been looking "flat" after a while of being in a deficit, a diet break will make them appear "fuller." Enjoy.

- **Provide a very significant mental break** by giving you a full 1-2 week period where you are allowed to eat more food after weeks/months of purposely eating less. While single-day refeeds and calorie cycling both serve a similar purpose, the psychological effect of a diet break is much larger. How much so? Here's an analogy I like to use. Take someone who works (or goes to school) Monday-Friday. For them, a refeed is the equivalent of a *Saturday* or a *Sunday* off, and calorie cycling is the equivalent of a *three-day weekend*. But a diet break? That's the equivalent of a *1-2 week vacation*. It's just better than the type of short break you usually have. You look forward to it more (e.g., "only X more days/weeks until my diet break!!"), it lasts a lot longer, you get to enjoy it more, and on and on and on. It also gives you a way to break up a potentially long fat loss phase (depending on how much you have to lose) into shorter blocks separated by these deficit "vacations" during which you get some time to reset yourself mentally before continuing on. Psychologically speaking, this can be a huge factor in both short-term and long-term diet adherence.

- **Substantially lower most of those "switches" and reverse most of the effects of the body fighting back.** Compared to refeeds or calorie cycling, a full diet break will reverse the various hormonal/metabolic adaptations of being in a prolonged deficit to a much more significant degree. Things that went down (e.g., leptin, testosterone, thyroid, etc.) will come back up. Things that went up (e.g., cortisol, ghrelin, etc.) will come back down. Metabolic rate will increase. Hunger will decrease. Irritability/moodiness will be reduced. Water retention will subside. Etc., etc., etc. Basically, at the end of a diet break, you'll be in a much more ideal position to resume your deficit and successfully make your next few weeks/months of problem-free fat loss happen.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

It's very, very simple.

To take a diet break, increase your calorie intake (primarily via additional carbs) so that you are at your maintenance level every day for the next 1-2 weeks. (And more often than not, I'd suggest 2 weeks rather than 1.)

And… *that's it*.

Try to relax and enjoy the break as much as possible.

Nope, nothing different needs to be done with your **protein**, **fat** or **carb** intake besides increasing carbs to whatever amount is needed to get your calorie intake up to your maintenance level.

If you were using the **calorie cycling** approach, you will be taking a break from that as well. That means you will be eating the same maintenance-level amount of calories and the same amount of protein, fat and carbs every day regardless of whether it's a training day or a rest day. This is a *diet break* after all, so we want to keep everything as simple and effortless as possible to give you the biggest mental break possible. No calorie cycling needed.

And if you were using **single-day refeeds**, you'd obviously be taking a break from them as well during this time because you're already out of the deficit and back up to maintenance, so there's simply no need for a refeed under those conditions.

Once the 1-2 week break is over, resume your caloric deficit and return to the same refeed/calorie cycling schedule you were using before the diet break.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD A DIET BREAK TAKE PLACE?

In most cases, **a diet break should happen once every 6-16 weeks**.

Yes, that's a fairly broad range, but that's because different people need and benefit from slightly different things at different points in the fat loss process.

When it comes to diet breaks, the same factors we talked about earlier regarding the frequency of single-day refeeds apply here just the same.

In case you forgot (in which case you *seriously* need to take care of that head injury already), here are two examples of how the frequency of diet breaks should be determined in the real world…

1. Imagine someone who is in the very early stages of being in a deficit, and/or someone with a lot of fat to lose, and/or someone with a higher body fat percentage, and/or someone who is obese, and/or someone whose strength and performance in the gym is holding up well, and/or someone who is making good fat loss progress and feels just fine overall. **This would be the type of person who needs less frequent diet breaks. For example, once every 10-16 weeks.**

2. Now imagine someone who might be further into their fat loss diet, and/or someone who has a lesser amount of fat to lose, and/or someone who is at a lower body fat percentage, and/or someone who is having issues with strength and performance in the gym, and/or someone who is beginning to lose weight slower than they should be, and/or someone who simply feels the effects of their body fighting back more so than they would like to (hunger, mood, lethargy, sleep, awareness of food, etc.). **This would be the type of person who needs more frequent diet breaks. For example, once every 6-12 weeks.**

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(Also note again that people in the first group will eventually be in the second group. Meaning, as you spend more time in a deficit, get leaner and become closer to reaching your goal, the frequency of diet breaks should increase because the need for it will be increasing as well.)

So, basically, here's the recommendation in a nutshell: throw in a full 1-2 week diet break once every 6-16 weeks. Base exactly how often you do it within that range on a combination of commonsense reasoning (e.g., someone with 50-100 lbs to lose needs it less frequently than someone with 10-20 lbs to lose), how your strength levels are holding up in the gym, and how you're feeling both physically and mentally overall.

No need to make it any more complicated than that.

EXPECT SHORT-TERM BODY WEIGHT CHANGES TO OCCUR

Do you remember how I mentioned there would be short-term body weight changes taking place after doing a single-day refeed? And that the same sort of thing will happen after the three higher calorie/carb days of the calorie cycling approach?

Well, guess what's going to happen when you come out of the deficit and spend 1-2 weeks at your maintenance level?

That's right… you can once again expect to see a completely **normal** and completely **temporary** increase in body weight during the diet break and in the days after.

Do. Not. Worry.

This *temporary* weight gain is simply a combination of the same ***temporary* water weight**, ***temporarily* replenished muscle glycogen stores**, ***temporary* weight of additional food in your stomach waiting to be digested**, plus (potentially) **some small amount of regained muscle**.

So, you can once again expect to see some degree of gain in body weight during/immediately following a diet break. Once you return to your normal diet with your normal calorie and carb intake, your weight will go back down to what it previously was before the break (and of course continue to gradually go downwards as you continue losing fat). That's scenario #1.

Interestingly enough, there's actually a second scenario that may occur in terms of how your body weight (and visual appearance in general) changes during/after a diet break.

And that involves a potential **loss of water weight**.

You see, cortisol – the stress hormone we talked about earlier – goes up in a deficit, and this often leads to an increase in water retention. This water retention occurs to a much more significant degree when an excessively low calorie intake and/or an excessively high activity level (e.g., tons of cardio) are used (which, of course, is one of the many reasons why such extremes should be avoided).

I'm bringing this up now because a diet break will cause cortisol to decrease back to something closer to normal levels, and that can bring about a sudden loss of water weight. You may have seen this referred to before as the "**whoosh**" effect.

Which means, you may actually end up *losing* some weight (in the form of water) while at your maintenance level during a diet break, and find that you look some degree leaner despite the fact that you are eating more calories and aren't even in a deficit.

Quick tangent

People often mistake this scenario for proof that "starvation mode" is real (it's not) and that "eating more calories" caused them to lose fat after a period of no weight loss (which was supposedly due to "not eating enough calories to lose fat"). *These people are wrong*. They are simply mistaking water retention and water loss… caused by increases and decreases in cortisol… caused by a period of being in a deficit followed by a period of being out of the deficit (or at least in a less extreme deficit)… for gains and losses in *actual* body fat.

Tangent over

It's also possible that the factors that can cause a gain in body weight during a diet break will balance out with the factors that can cause a loss of body weight… *and your weight will end up staying pretty much the same*.

Honestly, though, if there is one big take home point to this section, it's this: **it really doesn't matter what your body weight ends up doing during/immediately after a diet break**. It's meaningless.

I just wanted to cover all of the bases so you're not confused by whichever scenario takes place.

So… enjoy the break, return to your normal diet when those 1-2 weeks are over, and continue weighing yourself every day and only focusing on the weekly averages over a span of 2-4 weeks.

Now let's put it all together for the final recommendations…

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

If you are one of the many people that attempt to lose fat, you may be smart (or perhaps, lucky) enough to end up directly (or indirectly) being in the caloric deficit you need to be in for fat loss to occur.

And from there, the vast majority of people who are able to make it that far **will try to ride that deficit out until the very end**.

They will do everything they can to make sure they remain in that deficit from the day their diet starts until the day when all of the fat they wanted to lose has been lost, all of their long-term goals have been reached, and their body looks, feels and functions as well as they intended for it to look, feel and function.

Consistent deficit… consistent diet… consistent eating… consistent progress. Day in and day out. Week in and week out. Month in and month out.

No breaks, no letting up, no mercy!!!

While this all sounds lovely on paper, **the reality is that it isn't actually going to happen**. Your heart may be in the right place, but your brain isn't.

Simply put… ***one way or another, you WILL end up coming out of that deficit***.

Most often, it's going to happen because some or all of the problems associated with being in a deficit (hunger, muscle loss, metabolic slowdown, mood issues, lethargy, sleep issues, libido issues, and on and on and on) have gradually worn you down and caused you to reach a breaking point that *unintentionally* makes you come out of your deficit.

Basically… your bathtub got too full and finally overflowed.

Waaaaay less often, however, it's because you were smart enough to *intentionally* come out of your deficit before ever coming close to reaching that breaking point, thereby preventing it from ever happening.

Now, do you see all of the people in that first, much-more-common scenario?

These are the people that will usually fail. These are the people that will lose some fat and then gain some back. Be on their diet eating like they're supposed to one day, or one week, or one

month, and then be off their diet eating in the opposite manner the next day, or week, or month. They'll feel good and motivated and dedicated and be super consistent early on when things are easy, and then lose all of that once things start getting hard.

But, do you see the people in that second, much-less-common scenario?

These are the people that will usually succeed. These are the people who are going to periodically let that bathtub drain out before it overflows. These are the people who are smart enough to take the occasional step back (or, more accurately, just stand still for a bit) so they can take the next ten steps forward. These are the people who are putting themselves in the best possible position for reaching their fat loss goals.

And guess what? You now know everything you need to know to be one of those people.

You've now seen the three different methods (refeeds, calorie cycling and diet breaks) that you can use to temporarily pause your deficit for the purpose of sending your body the "fed" signal it needs to stop/lessen/reverse those survival "switches" and get the various physiological and psychological benefits that come along with doing so.

The only question is: **which of these three methods should you use?**

THE THREE APPROACHES

Here now are the three different approaches I recommend using, and the specific group of people that each approach will be most ideal for.

APPROACH #1: CALORIE CYCLING + DIET BREAKS

This option is most ideal for **men who are about 16% body fat or lower**, and **women who are about 24% body fat or lower**.

The leaner we are (or the leaner we become), the harder the body will be fighting back against our attempt to get even leaner. Which means, all of the problems associated with being in a caloric deficit (including the risk of muscle loss) will be at their worst for people who are in this range of body fat.

To counteract this reality, the three-day calorie cycling method combined with diet breaks (taken at the previously specified intervals) will be the best approach for men and women who are at this level of body fat.

(Note: For readers of my other book, *Superior Muscle Growth*, this is the approach I'd usually recommend using during a "fat loss phase." Meaning, once you have spent a sufficient amount of time building muscle, and you have reached my recommended upper limit of body fat that warrants switching from a "muscle building phase" to a "fat loss phase" in accordance with my guidelines in that book, this is the approach to use. If, however, you are above my recommended upper range of body fat, see Approach #2 below.)

APPROACH #2: SINGLE-DAY REFEEDS + DIET BREAKS

This option is most ideal for **men who are about 17% body fat or higher**, and **women who are about 25% body fat or higher**.

While the human body will *always* fight back to some degree against being in a deficit, and all of those associated problems will *always* be present to some extent, the simple fact is that it won't be quite as significant for people in this body fat percentage range compared to people in the previously mentioned range.

For this reason, a combination of single-day refeeds (used at the previously specified intervals) and diet breaks (taken at the previously specified intervals) will be the best approach.

Could the calorie cycling method still be used instead of single-day refeeds in this case if you wanted to do so for whatever reason? *Yes*. However, it just wouldn't be as necessary or beneficial, and could potentially be detrimental in terms of diet adherence because you're now trying to do something slightly more complicated than you truly need to be doing.

That's rarely a good idea.

For these reasons, single-day refeeds + diet breaks is the approach I'd recommend to men and women in this range of body fat percentage. (Note: When you become leaner and reach the point where you are in the body fat range mentioned in Approach #1, switching to that option would then be something to consider doing.)

In addition to the above recommendation, there is another group of people who this option may also be ideal for. And that would be people who are in the body fat percentage range from Approach #1 (and who Approach #1 would therefore be ideal for), **BUT find calorie cycling to be too complicated, or too much work, or involve too much adjusting throughout the week, or**

whatever else… *and would prefer to keep things as simple and easy as possible for diet adherence purposes*.

Meaning, even though Approach #1 might be my default recommendation for these people, it's important to remember that overall diet adherence (specifically in terms of meeting your total calorie and macronutrient intake goals each day) is ALWAYS the most important thing.

Yes, even when there might be certain minor benefits to doing something a certain way, **what's best for diet adherence will always outweigh those benefits**.

So, regardless of whether Approach #1 would indeed be a person's most ideal option (and my preferred option for them), their ability to actually stick to their diet on a consistent basis and sustain it long-term is what matters most. *By far*. Which means, if using a calorie cycling approach might interfere with that for whatever reason, that person should avoid it in favor of using this approach (single-day refeeds + diet breaks) instead.

APPROACH #3: DIET BREAKS ONLY

This option is ideal for **anyone who feels like either of the *slightly*-more-complicated approaches (#1 or #2) and the *slightly*-more-complicated methods they incorporate (calorie cycling or single-day refeeds) will in some way cause issues for them with diet adherence**.

Just like I said a minute ago, overall adherence to your diet (specifically in terms of your total calorie and macronutrient intake) in both the short-term and long-term is the true key to your success. And while refeeds and calorie cycling are methods that are designed to only *help* with that adherence and *increase* your likelihood of success, a small percentage of people just aren't suited for the *slightly*-more-complicated dietary adjustments they entail and do better by keeping things as simple and easy as possible.

So, if you are someone who fits this description, this is the approach for you. (Note: If you do end up choosing this approach, I'd recommend taking more frequent diet breaks… such as once every 8 weeks.)

In addition to the above recommendation, there is one other group of people who this option may also be ideal for. And that would be **people with past or present disordered eating habits**.

Some (but certainly not all) of the people fitting this description may find that the concept of strategically overeating in a *controlled* manner on certain days (like refeeds and calorie cycling)

adds gasoline to the fire of their previous/current disordered eating habits… the kind of habits that typically involve a very unhealthy (and *uncontrolled*) "binge and restrict" mindset.

In many cases, methods like refeeds and calorie cycling actually help to *prevent* this type of mindset and the behavior that accompanies it. But in certain cases, with certain people, it can have the opposite effect. For those fitting this description, this approach (diet breaks only) might be the ideal option to choose.

And now to answer the final question that has probably popped into your head while reading these recommendations…

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT MY BODY FAT PERCENTAGE IS?

Good question. As you may have noticed, the main factor separating whether a person should use Approach #1 or Approach #2 is body fat percentage.

That means you will need to have some idea of what your body fat percentage is in order to determine which of those two options is right for you.

The problem with this is that the typical methods most people use to figure it out are borderline useless in terms of getting something close to an accurate number. For example:

- **Calculators:** You know the random calculator you found on some website that claims to tell you your body fat percentage based on your height, weight, gender and a couple of measurements? Yeah… it's crap.
- **Bioelectrical Impedance (BIA):** You know those scales and handheld devices that send a tiny electric current through your body to determine what your body fat percentage is? Yeah… they're crap too. (Christian Finn does a nice job of explaining why here.)
- **Skin Fold Calipers:** You know those calipers you use to measure the thickness of certain pinched-together areas of fat on your body? They're actually okay. The problem, however, is that you need to have it done by someone who knows what they're doing (ideally, someone who has done it hundreds of times for hundreds of other people) to get anything remotely accurate.

So, what are you supposed to do? Well, there are a couple of methods for getting a more accurate measurement of what your body fat percentage is (mainly DXA and underwater weighing). But the bad news is that they aren't exactly quick, easy, convenient or cheap, and the average person reading this is unlikely to ever use any of them. Plus, they're still not perfectly accurate.

The truth is, unless you let someone kill you, dissect you and then weigh everything out, you're never going to get a perfectly accurate measurement of your body fat percentage.

(Disclaimer: Please don't let anyone kill and dissect you.)

Luckily for us though, we don't actually need it to be that accurate. We just need it to be *accurate enough*. And for that, there's one remaining option left to use that is probably the best option of them all.

And that is by simply getting yourself familiar with what various body fat percentages *legitimately* look like, and then using a combination of what you see in the mirror and what you see in your own progress pictures to take your best *unbiased* guess as to where you stand.

To help you do this, here are a couple of decent starting points with pictures of what different body fat percentages look like on men and women:

- http://www.builtlean.com/2012/09/24/body-fat-percentage-men-women/
- http://www.muscleforlife.com/how-to-measure-body-fat-percentage/

In most cases, this is all anyone will need.

And with that, you now know exactly how to use methods like refeeds, calorie cycling and diet breaks to produce superior fat loss results.

What comes next? Let's find out…

CHAPTER 13

Tracking Your Diet: How To Count Calories/Macronutrients

▶ TRACKING YOUR DIET: HOW TO COUNT CALORIES/MACRONUTRIENTS

One thing that should be pretty clear at this point is just how important your total calorie and macronutrient intake is to your fat loss results.

It's kinda… *the key to your diet*.

That is why virtually all of the dietary guidelines in this book revolve entirely around eating specific amounts of calories, protein, fat and carbs each day.

However, in order to actually meet those guidelines, **you're going to need to know how to *accurately* track your diet and ensure that you're eating the amounts of calories and macronutrients you're supposed to be eating**.

Now, you may have noticed that I put the word "accurately" in italics there. I did this because it's the key word in that sentence.

The reason why goes back to something I alluded to earlier in this book involving problems with **unknown noncompliance**.

Aka… **unknowingly eating more than you think you are**.

AVOIDING PROBLEMS WITH UNKNOWN NONCOMPLIANCE

See, people on fat loss diets often end up in a scenario where they claim to be "*doing everything right but still aren't losing fat*."

In most cases, this is because the "everything right" they are referring to is actually a bunch of stupid horseshit (yup, that's another technical term). You know… like thinking fat loss isn't about calories in vs calories out, and therefore focusing on doing some other pointless "thing" instead.

Regardless of how "right" they do that other thing, the reason why they aren't losing fat is because that "thing" is not THE thing they actually need to be doing for fat loss to occur.

However, in other cases, the person understands and fully accepts the proven principle of calories in vs calories out and uses/creates a diet that is intelligently built around it.

You know… like *Superior Fat Loss* is.

So, they create their caloric deficit, set their protein, fat and carb intake, and then put it all into action consistently.

And then… *nothing*.

They're seemingly doing everything right, but fat loss still isn't happening.

WTF?

There are actually a handful of reasons for this (all of which will be covered in an upcoming chapter), but – spoiler alert!! – one of the primary causes is being unknowingly noncompliant.

The person THINKS they're doing everything right. They THINK they're eating the right total amount of calories, protein, fat and carbs each day. They THINK they're in a caloric deficit. They THINK they're complying with the requirements of their diet.

But, completely unbeknownst to them… *they are not*.

How does this happen, you ask?

By unknowingly and unintentionally under-estimating, under-reporting, miscalculating, or just making some kind of simple mistake (or *mistakes*) within the tracking of their diet that has caused them to end up eating more than they think they are.

It's a scenario that occurs much more often than anyone realizes. Actually, scratch that. People who work in the diet field know EXACTLY how frequently this occurs, because they see it happen all the time with their clients. Again, numerous studies have shown this, too.

Mistakes in diet tracking is one of the most common reasons why people following a fat loss diet that *should work* end up seeing it *not work*.

To avoid ever having this problem, let's take a look at what needs to be done to ensure that you're *actually* eating the total amount of calories and macronutrients you're supposed to be eating.

HOW TO TRACK YOUR DIET

Let's start with the simple three-step process of diet tracking…

STEP 1: FIND THE NUTRITIONAL CONTENT OF THE FOODS YOU EAT

The first and most obvious step in tracking your diet is finding the nutritional content of the foods (and drinks) you're eating (and drinking).

There are two ways to do this.

1. Check the back, side or front of the box, can, jar, bottle, bag or package that your food came in, and locate the "Nutrition Facts" label that is conveniently printed right on it.

2. Use any of the countless free diet tracking apps/websites that allow you to quickly look up thousands of different foods (from generic brands, brand names, restaurants, etc.) and view their full nutritional content instantly. (I'll recommend a few later.)

This part is pretty easy. It's the next step where people usually screw up.

STEP 2: ACCURATELY DETERMINE YOUR SERVING SIZE

In Step 1, all of the nutritional content you find will be for some general, predetermined amount of a food.

It'll say that one "Serving Size" of this food is some arbitrary number of ounces, or grams, or cups, or spoonfuls, or scoops, or whatever else. And all of the nutritional information that goes with it will be based on that EXACT serving size of that food.

The question is… how do you know if you're eating that exact amount?

And an even better question is… what happens if you want to eat some other amount altogether? A serving size that is some degree bigger or smaller than the default amount shown?

Well, the answer to all of these types of questions is pretty obvious: **you need a way to measure the serving sizes of the foods you eat**.

Not only that, but you need a method of measuring that will be as accurate as possible – one that will be the least likely to lead to you being unknowingly noncompliant.

So, which method will it be? There are really only three options to choose from:

1. **Eyeballing it/guessing.**
2. **Using measuring cups and measuring spoons.**
3. **Using a digital food scale.**

Guess which method is going to be the least accurate and the most likely to cause problems?

Yup… method #1. Eyeballing it and guessing. For this reason, we're going to eliminate it completely as a primary (or even secondary) option. It's *that* bad.

That leaves us with measuring cups/spoons vs a digital food scale. Which do you think is the better choice?

If you said digital food scale, *you win*.

A digital food scale is, by far, the best method to use. It's the method I recommend using the vast majority of the time… basically as often as realistically possible.

Because, while measuring cups/spoons are convenient in that most of us already have them in our kitchens, and they can certainly be more accurate than the "eyeballing" approach, the simple fact is that they're still far from being completely accurate and they are laughably easy to screw up.

Really, many of the problems people have with unknown noncompliance stem from skipping the digital food scale in favor of using some other less accurate method of measurement.

Wait, what's that you say? How big of a difference can there *really* be?

Rather than try to tell you, I'd much rather show. Below are links to a few videos that show slightly different versions of the same thing.

And those are… common real-world examples of why a digital food scale is significantly more accurate than measuring cups, measuring spoons, and "taking your best guess." Enjoy…

- https://youtu.be/JVjWPcIrWVY
- https://youtu.be/wez12gLI0fA
- https://youtu.be/vjKPIcI51IU

- https://youtu.be/VJvjbBEonOY

Point made? Good.

So… get yourself a digital food scale. There is no better "diet product" on the planet. They're small and cheap. They come in a variety of different colors and styles to match any kitchen. And they are as fast and easy to use as can be.

Just put some food on it and see exactly how many grams or ounces it weighs. You'll then be able to enter that exact serving size into whatever diet tracking app/website you use (or do the math yourself if you're using the label on the package) and instantly see the exact amount of calories and macronutrients (and fiber, etc.) that specific amount of food contains.

In terms of accurately tracking what you're eating, it's really a must-have item. I'd even go as far as to call it a *requirement* of diet tracking.

If you're looking for a recommendation, any of the food scales shown here will be perfectly fine.

3. TRACK THE TOTALS

All that's left to do now is keep track of the calories, protein, fat and carbs in all of the foods/meals you eat over the course of the day. Why? So you can make sure your totals end up where they're supposed to be.

When I first started tracking my diet in the early 2000s, this part was the biggest pain in the ass. It literally involved a pen, a notebook and me writing down the nutritional content of everything I was eating and then adding it up myself as I went along. And considering that I was still in my late teens at the time, this partially involved the help of my mom, because she was the one doing most of my cooking. Ah yes, the memories.

At some point, I finally put together a spreadsheet that did all of the adding for me and made things slightly easier.

While you are welcome to still use either of these methods if you really want to (but good lord, why would you really want to???), there is now a much better, much faster, much easier, and much more convenient option available.

And that is to simply use one of the many free diet tracking apps and websites around that will allow you to not only look up the nutritional content (for the exact serving size) of the foods you're eating, but also keep track of the totals of everything right there for you as well.

Considering that damn near all of them have an app available that you can use on your phone (iOS, Android, whatever you need), this option is pretty much as ideal as it gets.

Some popular examples include…

- MyFitnessPal
- CalorieKing
- FitDay
- Cron-o-meter
- Lose It!

(Note: Certain diet tracking apps allow users to submit foods and the nutritional content for those foods into the public database, which is then searchable by everyone. And sometimes, those user-submitted foods aren't quite accurate. So, if you happen to come across any user-submitted items when searching for a food, you may want to double check their accuracy at a second source.)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Now let's answer a few questions people often ask regarding the tracking of their diet…

1. SHOULD I WEIGH FOODS RAW OR COOKED?

Certain foods (e.g., meat, poultry, rice, pasta, etc.) will weigh different amounts before and after cooking them. This is mostly due to the water content of the food and how much moisture it ends up losing or retaining during cooking. This will vary based on exactly how long the food was cooked for and what method of cooking was used.

The problem with this is that a change in water content will affect the weight of a food *but not* its nutritional content (since it's only water). Which means, you will end up with different serving sizes (and therefore different amounts of calories/macronutrients) depending on whether you weighed the food in its raw or cooked state… even though it's still the same amount of food in both cases.

It's just the meaningless water content that has changed… which then changed the weight of the food along with it.

To prevent this from being a problem and throwing off your tracking, **it would be most ideal (and most accurate) to always weigh your foods in their raw, uncooked state**.

(Note #1: When putting this recommendation into action, be sure that the nutritional info you're using specifies that it's for the raw version of the food. If, however, the only nutritional info you have available to you is for the cooked version, then you'd obviously have to go with that and weigh the food in its cooked state instead.)

(Note #2: If the food label/nutritional information you have for a food doesn't specify if it's for the raw or cooked version, it's safe to assume that it's for the raw version. Typically, when it's for the cooked version, it says so.)

2. WHY DOESN'T THE COMBINED CALORIES FROM PROTEIN, FAT AND CARBS ADD UP TO BE EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE AMOUNT SHOWN FOR TOTAL CALORIES?

Earlier in this book, I explained that protein contains 4 calories per gram, fat contains 9 calories per gram, and carbs contain 4 calories per gram.

So, if some example food contained 10 g of each macronutrient, it would contain 170 calories. (4 x 10 = 40… 9 x 10 = 90… 4 x 10 = 40. And 40 + 90 + 40 = 170.)

But, you may occasionally find that the amount listed for "Calories" is something slightly different. In this example, it could be a little more or less than the 170 calories it should contain.

Why is this, you ask? **It's because nutrition labels round off their numbers.**

So, if a food contains 10.4 g of something, it will say 10 g. If it contains 10.6 g of something, it will say 11 g. Yeah, it's kinda dumb. But, it's fairly insignificant in the grand scheme of things and nothing to worry about at all.

3. HOW DO I COUNT CALORIES/MACRONUTRIENTS WHEN I'M EATING OUT AT A RESTAURANT?

That depends. If you're eating at a chain restaurant, the first thing you can do is check your diet tracking app. The nutrition info for most popular chains will usually be available there, as well as on each restaurant's own website.

However, if it's not a chain restaurant, your ability to track what you're eating is going to get quite a bit tougher. **Reason being, the nutrition info for most local, non-chain restaurants will usually not be available anywhere.**

On rare occasions, you may be lucky enough to find a place that has the calorie content listed right on the menu next to each food. On even rarer occasions, it may even be posted on the restaurant's website.

Even in these cases, though, it's important to remember that the cook isn't back in the kitchen accurately weighing things out to perfectly match the serving size of the nutritional info provided. They're just putting food on a plate, and you'll likely end up with different amounts of it each time you order the same item from the same place.

Much more often than not, however, you're not even going to have it this "good." **Rather, you'll most often find that no nutritional info is available at all.**

This is one of the obvious downsides to eating out at a restaurant vs eating your own meals in your own house that you prepared, weighed and cooked yourself in your own kitchen.

So, with this in mind, how are you supposed to track your diet and accurately count calories and macronutrients in this scenario?

The answer is: **as best as you realistically can**.

Meaning, do your best to make good choices in terms of what you order and how much of it you eat. Do your best to use a combination of eyeballing and guessing when it comes to serving sizes. Do your best to estimate as accurately as you can (possibly *overestimating* to play it safe) when it comes to calorie and macronutrient content.

Also, keep in mind that while your diet app won't have the exact foods you're eating from the exact restaurant you're eating at, it will almost always have similar and/or generic versions of what you're eating… and that will be ideal for basing your estimates on.

Let me give you an example of what I mean using Chinese food, because that's what I just happen to be eating for dinner later tonight.

Let's say you go to your favorite local Chinese restaurant (let's call it Restaurant XYZ) and order General Tso's Chicken. Mmmmm.

Unfortunately, you won't be able to find the nutritional info for Restaurant XYZ's specific General Tso's Chicken on any diet tracking app. BUT, if you simply search for General Tso's Chicken, you WILL be able to find other versions of it from other places. Now, sure, it's highly unlikely (or really, impossible) that they all used the exact same amounts of the exact same ingredients in the exact same total serving size as Restaurant XYZ did. But, the nutrition info will still serve as a decent starting point for estimating the nutritional content of the version you *are* eating.

Similarly, let's say you go to Restaurant XYZ again next week and get an egg roll as your appetizer, and then shrimp with mixed vegetables and white rice as your main dish. (I'll probably order this tonight, actually.)

Again, you're not going to find any of this from Restaurant XYZ on any app. However, you will find plenty of egg rolls from various other Chinese restaurants. You will also find generic versions of shrimp, for which you can estimate your serving size (what is there, usually 10 of them in a dish like this?) and determine calories/macronutrients that way. The same thing goes for generic white rice. And generic mixed vegetables. And then it would probably be a good/safe idea to overestimate a bit for the sauce that's on it (as that tends to be where most of the calories are).

This same concept can be applied to any other food or dish from any other type of restaurant.

No, this will never be completely accurate. Sometimes it may even be off by quite a bit. **But, it will hopefully be close enough in most cases, and that will help you track as best as you realistically can when eating out.**

In addition to this, there are other things you can do to help ensure that you stay within your dietary guidelines when eating out, or really whenever you find yourself in one of these less-than-ideal eating situations.

I'll be covering all of this and more in the next chapter ("Sustaining Your Diet In The Real World").

4. DO I HAVE TO COUNT EVERYTHING?

When people start tracking their diet, they eventually begin to notice that certain things (at least in certain serving sizes) contain very few calories (e.g., vegetables) and begin to wonder if they even need to count those items at all.

Others will sometimes assume that the tiny bit of food they ate/drank (e.g., a little milk in your coffee, a small piece of fruit, one small handful of something like nuts or berries, a parent who eats the little bit of food their kids leave over, the person who has just a little bite of something

here and there, etc.) most likely contained such an insignificant amount of calories that they probably didn't need to count it.

And others may have somehow come across the concept of "free foods," which are typically "healthy" foods that are thought to be low enough in calories (e.g., fruit) that you can eat as much of them as you'd like without counting it.

So… is any of this true?

Do you really have to count… *everything*?

In my experience, the best and safest answer to this question is **yes**. ***Count everything*.**

The reason why is obvious.

It's *extremely* easy to consume significantly more calories than you think you are when you aren't counting everything you're eating and drinking.

Even when those things may legitimately contain a small amount of calories… **it can add up**. Often much more and much faster than most people realize.

To the point where it's *extremely* common for people to fail to be in a caloric deficit simply because they didn't count things they assumed to be too insignificant to warrant counting.

It happens all the time.

In fact, I've seen plenty of instances of people ending up in a *surplus* and therefore gaining weight as a result of nothing more than not counting some seemingly tiny, insignificant things that unknowingly added up over time to be significant enough to wipe out their deficit (and then some).

Seriously. I've seen people realize they were eating hundreds of uncounted calories each day from these "insignificant" sources. Hundreds of calories. *Hundreds*. I even shared one of those stories on the AWR Facebook page.

For this reason, my recommendation is to count everything.

Now, I already know what some people might be thinking.

"I totally get what you're saying… but do I REALLY need to count lettuce? Or celery? Or similar super-low-calorie fibrous vegetables that people are unlikely to ever eat large quantities of?"

Honestly? No. You probably don't.

But again, I've learned that it's dangerous to answer the "do I need to count everything?" question with a "no" because, with certain people, hearing that "no" plants a seed in their brain that leads to other detrimental thoughts in the future.

It's just this weird thing that happens where that initial idea of "I don't need to count lettuce or celery" becomes "I probably don't need to count the other vegetables in my salad" which becomes "I probably don't need to count the salad dressing either" and before you know it, things that aren't quite as low in calories or things that are being eaten in larger quantities start not being counted either.

And that's when problems begin to arise.

At the same time, while it may be "really hard" and "very unlikely" for a person to overeat these types of foods to a degree that has a meaningful negative effect… the reality is that it's still not impossible.

For example, one stalk of broccoli contains about 30 calories. That's a pretty low number, sure. And yes, the fiber content of that broccoli will make it so that not all of those calories will end up being absorbed by your body. And yup, broccoli is a fairly filling food (say that five times fast), making it unlikely for most people to eat very large quantities of it.

BUT… **it's still not impossible**.

Tell people they can eat "unlimited amounts" of something "without counting it" and you may be surprised at how some people respond to hearing that. And how a relatively tiny amount of calories can start to add up to a meaningful amount when taken to an extreme. Or how the person may "forget" to count the dip or dressing (or whatever else) they are putting on that broccoli (or whatever they happen to be allowed to eat unlimited amounts of).

So, to hopefully avoid all of the above scenarios, my default recommendation is to count the calories, protein, fat and carbs in everything you are consuming. More often than not, it's the safest answer I can give.

Now, are there any exceptions to that answer? Sure.

As with any "default recommendation" aimed at being the best recommendation for the largest number of people, there are going to be exceptions.

And the main one worth mentioning is people who have a history of disordered eating habits. Specifically, if you are the kind of person that will take the above recommendation to an obsessive place, and/or the idea of counting the calories in low calorie foods like vegetables is a potential trigger for you, *then don't do it*.

Mental and physical health will always be more important than everything else.

More about that in a minute.

5. WHAT IF I'M UNKNOWINGLY MAKING A MISTAKE SOMEWHERE THAT IS CAUSING ME TO EAT MORE CALORIES THAN I THINK I AM?

Three things.

First, do your best to avoid this scenario. The advice and recommendations provided in this chapter should help with that quite a bit.

Second, always rely on "The Key Step." Meaning, regardless of estimates and calculators and diet tracking apps and assumptions and guesses and whatever else... the most important thing you can possibly do is monitor real world changes (i.e., weigh yourself daily and track the weekly averages over a significant period of time) and see what happens. If weight loss is happening at the ideal rate it should be, you'll know you're good. If it's not, and your weight is staying the same or possibly even going up, this is the ultimate failsafe for letting you know that adjustments (a small reduction in calories) need to be made.

Third, try to be consistent with your methods of tracking, weighing and logging. This way, even if you're unknowingly making a mistake somewhere, you'll be *consistently* making that same mistake every time.

So, let's pretend that someone's progress has stalled (no weight loss at all for 4 consecutive weeks or longer). Let's also pretend they *think* they're eating 2500 calories per day when they're *actually* eating 3000.

In this scenario, they simply need to reduce their calorie intake (as an example, let's say it's reduced by 500 calories) to get weight loss happening again.

This means that this person will *think* they're now eating 2000 calories per day, when they'll *actually* be eating 2500.

Yes, the same 500 calorie disparity is still present and they still aren't aware of it.

But, *who cares*?

The person will be back to losing weight at their ideal rate again, and that's what matters most. Whether they think they're eating 2000 calories when they're really eating 2500 isn't making any real positive or negative difference in the end.

SUFFICIENT ACCURACY VS OBSESSIVE PERFECTION

Let me preface this section by politely asking you to please – *pretty please* – not misinterpret what I'm about to say.

While it may initially look like I'm contradicting some of the points I just made about the importance of accurately tracking your diet, please realize that I am definitely not doing that at all.

You absolutely must track your diet closely. You absolutely must be vigilant with your food intake. You absolutely must do everything you can to track your calorie and macronutrient intake as accurately as possible each day.

Failure to do so is all but guaranteed to cause the types of problems that can negatively affect your results or possibly even prevent them altogether.

Having said that, there is an important distinction that needs to be made between the two different ways most people will approach the tracking of their diet when taking the above into account.

Some of us will aim for **sufficient accuracy**, while others will aim for **obsessive perfection**.

Now, I will gladly admit to being a perfectionist myself. I will also gladly admit to being the kind of person who obsesses over things that are important and/or of interest to me. I will also gladly admit that the combination of that obsessive perfectionist mindset is something I usually view as a GOOD thing.

It's definitely not for everyone, but it's definitely right for me. It's a mindset that has allowed me to accomplish a lot of meaningful things in my life… including the creation of this book.

However, I am here to tell you with firsthand experience that **diet tracking is NOT a good place for this type of obsessive perfectionist mindset**.

Why not, you ask?

Because, whether you like it or not, it's *impossible* to perfectly track your diet. It's *impossible* to eat EXACTLY a specific amount of each macronutrient – to the EXACT gram – day in and day out. It's *impossible* to consume EXACTLY one specific amount of calories every day… not a single calorie above or below it. There are factors that are out of your control that make it *impossible* to track your diet in a manner that is 100% perfectly accurate.

Please note my usage of the word "impossible" here.

I'm not saying it's hard. Or something that will just take more time and attention to detail. Or something you'll have to put more effort into than everyone else. No, no. It's flat out *impossible*.

For this reason, approaching the tracking of your diet in this way is only ever going to accomplish one thing: **driving you completely insane**.

And once that point is reached, there's two ways it will usually go.

Some people will go off of their diet. They'll eventually become so annoyed, or frustrated, or overwhelmed, or stressed, or mentally overworked by trying to be perfect that they'll just stop trying altogether.

Others, however, will go in a different direction. A much worse direction. A direction where their dietary obsessiveness grows and their desire for perfection increases. Until, one day, **disordered eating habits have developed** and/or **a bad relationship with food has been formed**.

Obviously, we want to avoid both of those scenarios.

To do that, we're going to avoid aiming for *obsessive perfection* within our diet in favor of aiming for *sufficient accuracy* instead.

Just what is "sufficient accuracy," you ask?

It's a few things.

First and foremost, it's the realization that perfection is impossible, and striving for it will do much more harm than good.

Second, it's understanding that being *slightly* off in your tracking will not make any truly significant difference whatsoever.

Third, it's understanding that being *slightly* off from what your calorie and macronutrient totals are supposed to be each day will not make any truly significant difference, either.

In fact, allowing for some small margin of error is not only okay… it's *psychologically ideal*.

So what kind of margin am I talking about, exactly?

In most cases, I recommend getting within 100 calories of your daily calorie intake goal. This typically equates to getting within about 5-10 grams of your daily protein, fat and carb intake goals.

So, for example, if you're supposed to consume 2000 calories today, but you end up at 1954 or 2078 or whatever else… it's fine. You're still within 100 calories of the goal amount. And if you're supposed to eat 200 g of carbs (or whatever else) today, but you end up at 205 g or 195 g or something similar… it's fine. You're still within 5-10 g of the goal amount, and that's likely to mean you are still within 100 calories of your calorie goal.

Obviously, you want to try to get as close to your goal numbers as *realistically* possible. That is the goal, after all. But, at the same time, you need to realize that literally hitting those numbers to the exact gram or the exact calorie (and doing it every single day) is going to be *impossible*.

Even worse, the stress and overall insanity involved in forcing yourself to somehow try to make it happen anyway ("Oh no, I ate 3 g more fat today than I was supposed to!!!! Noooooooo! I'm such a failure!!!" or "It's 11:59 PM and I'm still 5 g under my protein intake goal for today… I need to find a way to eat exactly 5 g of protein and I only have 60 seconds left in the day to do it!!!") is only going to lead to problems.

For all of these reasons, giving yourself this small margin of error (and ensuring you stay within it) will be a much more realistic and healthy way to approach the tracking of your diet.

You'll still make the progress you need to make, and you won't lose your mind in the process.

That, right there, is what *sufficient accuracy* is.

DO I HAVE TO COUNT CALORIES AND MACRONUTRIENTS FOREVER?

A question I commonly get asked – typically by people who have just started tracking their diet for the first time – **is whether this is something they are now going to have to do every single day for the rest of their lives**?

That's a good question.

FIRST OF ALL...

The first thing I like to do after being asked this question is point out that no matter how hard and annoying the task of counting your calories and macronutrients may *seem* right now, A) it's not *actually* that hard and annoying, and B) the more you do it, the easier it becomes.

Like any new worthwhile habit, it's always going to seem like a bigger pain in the ass when you first try to implement it.

But then, over time... **it gets easier**. Much easier, in fact. And it becomes much less annoying of a task to do regularly. You'll even find that it becomes pretty routine. Like brushing your teeth or showering. And it honestly doesn't take much longer than these types of normal daily tasks do, either. It just sort of blends right in with them.

Which is all my way of saying relax and give it some time. However annoying it *seems* now, it will seem a whole lot less annoying at this time next month. And again the month after that. And again the month after that. And so on.

Plus, when you start to see this task playing a huge positive role in your fat loss progress, you'll quickly forget why you were so annoyed by it in the first place.

Having said all of that, though, the original question still remains totally valid. Let's answer it.

DO I HAVE TO COUNT CALORIES/MACRONUTRIENTS FOREVER?

The best general answer I have is... *it depends*.

Not exactly the definitive answer you were looking for, was it? Sorry about that.

But hey, I have some good news. In order for me to explain why "it depends" is the best general answer to this question, there's a legitimately definitive statement I need to make.

And that is this: **I recommend that everyone consistently tracks their overall diet and daily food intake (in accordance with the guidelines laid out in this chapter) for a *significant period of time***.

I'm talking *at least* a few months. Ideally a full year. Sometimes, even longer than a year.

Why? **Because this is the amount of time and experience it usually takes for a person to get really good at it.** And getting really good at diet tracking is not only a *requirement* of successful fat loss, it's also a *requirement* of the successful long-term maintenance of those results.

Now here's where things get interesting.

You see, once that point has been reached… that requirement has been met… and the person has gotten enough diet tracking experience under their belt to become really good at it, a funny thing happens…

You kinda start to just… *know things*. You develop certain… *dietary skills*.

For example…

- You begin to recognize what certain serving sizes of certain foods/meals look like without always having to weigh them.
- You begin to know the calorie and macronutrient content of certain serving sizes of certain foods/meals without looking them up… because you've memorized it.
- You begin to realize that you eat a lot of the same foods and meals on a regular basis, and you've sorta become an expert at the process of tracking those common foods/meals.
- You find yourself relying less on your diet tracking app than you did at the beginning, and may have even gotten better at doing the dietary math in your head.
- You find that you've gotten pretty good at mentally planning out your diet in real time. So, for example, you may automatically know that the breakfast and lunch you ate earlier today allows for a certain meal or amount of food to be eaten at dinner… all without logging any of it.
- **Basically, a combination of experience, memorization, habit, uniform eating (eating the same foods/meals on a regular basis), intuitive eating and greatly improved dietary instincts may**

give you the ability to hit your calorie and macronutrient goals each day while being *some degree* less strict with the tracking of your diet than you initially needed to be.

This is why closely and consistently tracking your diet each day for a significant amount of time is so important. It allows you to become really good at it, and these are the types of perks that come with getting really good at it.

I personally consider myself to be really, REALLY good at it. I've spent *years* closely tracking my diet. I've gotten to the point where I can close my eyes, put my hand into a container of almonds (a food I eat on a regular basis), pull out a random amount, put it on the scale, and then guess exactly how many grams it weighs with startling accuracy. I've even gotten various friends and family members to witness this, and they were all completely amazed by my ability. (And by "completely amazed," I mean "annoyed that they just wasted their time watching an idiot weigh almonds.")

But my point here is this. **With time and experience comes skill.** And with skill comes a reduced reliance on the tools that were needed to acquire that skill. Diet tracking is no different.

With this in mind, you might then be wondering why my answer to the original question ("do I have to count calories and macronutrients forever?") wasn't a universal "no, you don't."

I mean, based on what I just explained, it seems pretty clear that once that ideal diet tracking experience level is reached, people can simply rely on their newfound skills rather than continuing to closely count and track everything for the rest of their lives.

Right?!?

Ehhh, not quite.

The reason why goes back to something I've said many times before and will surely say again: *people are different*. We all need and benefit from different things at different points.

So while these skills may be enough to allow some people to no longer need to count calories and macronutrients with the same degree of strictness they needed to use early on, **many others WILL need to continue doing things that exact same way**.

Like it or not, a very significant portion of the population will have issues with unknown noncompliance (and potentially even known noncompliance) if they ease up too much (or even at all) on how closely they are tracking their diet and food intake.

SO… WHAT THE HELL DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN?

It's actually pretty simple.

- **Closely and consistently track your diet for a significant period of time.** How long, exactly? Long enough to – at the very least – make significant fat loss progress (maybe even reaching your long-term goal) and acquire the types of dietary skills I described a few minutes ago. After that, it's up to you to determine which approach will suit YOU best going forward…
- **For many people, that's going to be continuing to closely count calories and macronutrients each day for the foreseeable future.** Maybe just as strictly as they did on day 1… maybe a little less so. Either way, they will need to continue to closely track their diet in order to continue making progress and/or permanently maintain the progress they've made.
- **For others, however, they'll be able to rely a little more on those dietary skills we keep talking about, and thus a little less on counting/tracking as closely as they originally were.** To exactly what degree they'll be able to do this will, of course, depend on them.
- Others may not be so sure one way or the other, in which case experimenting with both approaches and seeing what suits them best would be something to consider trying.

Regardless of which approach you end up going with, there is one important thing to ALWAYS continue doing…

Closely monitor real-world changes and adjust if needed.

This means weighing yourself daily and tracking the weekly averages to ensure that things are moving in the right direction at the ideal rate (or to ensure that things are staying put once you've reached your goal and are just looking to maintain it).

This will always be the ultimate failsafe for determining if what you're doing is actually working like it should be or if adjustments need to be made.

If things are going well, you're good. Your chosen diet tracking approach is presently working for you. Keep monitoring things to ensure it stays that way.

But if it's not… you need to take that as a sign that the approach you're using either needs to be tightened up a little (or a lot), or maybe just isn't right for you, period.

AS FOR ME...

If you happen to be wondering what I personally do within my own diet, it's this:

- I continue to use my food scale on a daily basis to ensure that my serving sizes are always accurate. I weigh out as much of the food I eat at home as I realistically can. Even in cases where I probably don't *need* to do this (like when I'm eating almonds, for example), I still do it anyway. I'm just one of those kinds of people who likes to be as accurate as I can. Plus, the scale is literally sitting on my kitchen counter ready to be used. There is so little time and effort involved in doing so that it seems almost silly not to.

- However, I rarely look up the nutritional content of those serving sizes because, most of the time, I'm eating a food/meal that I've eaten so many times before that I already know its calorie and macronutrient content. I'll still occasionally look stuff up if I need to, but I hardly ever need to. That's just one of the many skills that come with significant experience.

- I also don't closely track my totals each day or log my food intake into an app or anything like that... and I honestly haven't done so on a consistent long-term basis in quite a while (note that this comes after *years* of doing it, though). At this point, I only do that sort of thing for a short-term period of time directly after making an adjustment to my diet (such as when switching from a fat loss phase to a muscle building phase, or vice versa, and therefore making some kind of major change to my daily calorie/macronutrient intake). This is done to give myself some time to adjust to my new calorie/macronutrient intake goals and acquire the dietary skills needed to hit these new numbers without continuing to closely track it all every single day.

- This is made ***significantly*** easier for me thanks to the fact that uniform eating suits me well. Meaning, I typically eat the exact same breakfast and lunch every day (and the same pre- and post-workout meals most training days). So, it's mainly just my dinner that changes on a daily basis, and even then, I tend to have a handful of meals (and a handful of different protein sources, different carb sources, etc. for each) that I rotate through most nights (or restaurants I eat at) depending on what I'm in the mood for. So, for example, if I had 500 calories left for dinner yesterday, and I ate the same breakfast and lunch today that I ate that day, I'll know that I have the same 500 calories left for dinner tonight without having to track anything. This is one of the benefits of uniform eating. It makes things pretty damn easy. Sure, that lack of variety may not be ideal for some people, but I love it. And that's really all that matters.

- So basically, at this point, it's really less about me counting and logging the calories and macronutrients in everything I eat each day, and more about me already *knowing* the

calorie/macronutrient content of various foods/meals that I eat and then counting THAT instead. I mentally put everything together in the serving sizes I need to so that I arrive at the calorie and macronutrient totals I need to arrive at by the end of the day. So it's kinda like I count foods and meals (whose nutritional content I already know) rather than nutritional content itself… even though it's really one and the same. It's like I'm indirectly counting calories and macronutrients, I guess.

- Most importantly of all, I continue to ALWAYS track what my body is doing. If things are doing what they're supposed to be doing at the ideal rate they're supposed to be happening, I know I'm doing just fine. If not, I adjust accordingly.

- Remember, though, that this is nothing more than an example of what works best for me after spending *years* closely tracking my diet and logging my food intake. I now have the "skills," eating habits and preferences needed to make this work just fine. You should do whatever is best for you.

And with that, you now have all of the diet tracking tools and knowledge you need to be as successful as possible with your fat loss goals.

All you need to do now is ensure that you remain in your diet tracking comfort zone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and everything will be super easy and go super smoothly!

Well… except for one teeny, tiny problem: *that's not actually going to happen*.

Let me explain…

CHAPTER 14

Sustaining Your Diet In The Real World

SUSTAINING YOUR DIET IN THE REAL WORLD

Throughout this book thus far, we've covered how much to eat, what to eat, when and how to eat, and of course why it's ideal to eat in this manner.

And most recently, we just finished covering how to accurately track it all.

All you need to do now is be 100% perfect and consistent with it all, 100% of the time, in 100% of the circumstances you are in… *and everything will go perfectly*!

Yeah!! Awesome!! Woo!!

Wait…

What's that you're saying?

This statement is maybe… just… *slightly unrealistic*?

Oh. I see what you mean.

Unfortunately, you're absolutely right.

The truth is, the likelihood of you (or me, or anyone) being 100% perfect and consistent 100% of the time in 100% of the circumstances… is 0%.

Try as we might, things will never go as perfectly, consistently or smoothly as we'd like for them to go.

Now, sometimes, that's entirely our own fault. We occasionally get off track a little here and there, and stray from what we're supposed to be doing. It's normal. It happens. We're human.

But other times, it's not our fault. Or at least, it's not *entirely* our fault.

Sometimes it's just a simple matter of things being a little different in the real world than we expected them to be on paper.

THE PAPER WORLD VS THE REAL WORLD

You see, on paper, it all seems relatively easy.

Sure, there will obviously be work and effort and time involved. But, overall, everything you've seen in this book so far probably seems consistently doable and problem-free.

Do you know why it seems that way?

Because, on paper, *there are no problems*.

Hell, the entire concept of problems doesn't really even exist in this "**paper world**."

In this magical place, everything is perfect. There are no interruptions. There is no outside interference. There is no sign of anything anywhere that could potentially stop, prevent, hinder or in any way screw with your ability to comply with your dietary requirements and sustain them for as long as you damn well please.

Everyone loves the paper world for this very reason. The impossible is possible here. It's a truly beautiful place.

And as long as you're willing to lock yourself in a room inside your house all by yourself, and never leave it or let anyone in, and completely ignore and avoid the outside world… everything may just end up being as consistently doable and problem-free for you as it initially seems on paper.

Except it won't… *because that's not actually going to happen*. (Well, hopefully.)

That's because this is the "**real world**." The *really* real world. And here, things tend to go a little bit differently than they seemed like they would on paper. For example…

- In the real world, you won't always be home by yourself in your "ideal environment" under "ideal circumstances" to choose and cook and weigh and log and track what you're eating.
- You won't always have your food scale with you.
- You won't always know the calorie and macronutrient content of the food you're eating.
- You won't always know the ingredients in what you're eating.
- You won't always be eating alone.

- You won't always be around the types of foods that you're supposed to be eating.
- You won't always feel motivated to eat the way you're supposed to eat (or eat the amounts you're supposed to eat) and stick to your diet.
- Things won't always be as easy, ideal, doable and problem-free as it seemed like they would in the paper world.

Nope. They certainly won't.

Because… in the real world…

- Instead of being at home in your own kitchen making your own food and eating it alone, you'll sometimes be at work or in school. Or…
- You'll be eating out at a restaurant.
- You'll be on vacation.
- You'll be at a party.
- You'll be eating during a holiday or special occasion.
- You'll be eating socially with friends or family.
- You'll be eating food someone else cooked.
- You'll be unable to weigh out your serving sizes.
- You'll be unable to look up the nutritional content of the foods you're eating.
- You'll be unable to accurately track your food intake.
- You'll be surrounded by yummy food you normally wouldn't be eating.
- You'll be tempted by foods you normally try to avoid eating.
- You'll be unable to eat the amounts of each macronutrient that you're supposed to be eating.
- You'll go over your intended calorie intake.
- You'll be in "less-than-ideal environments" under "less-than-ideal circumstances."

Yup. You certainly will.

And it's this – this major difference between what's expected or assumed in the paper world vs what actually happens in the real world – that causes many people to fail to reach their fat loss goals.

Why is this?

I think, above all else, it's because they simply weren't ready for it.

They didn't really know what would happen, or how big the difference would be, or how it would affect them, or how much harder and problem-filled the real world is than the paper world.

And so… **they're just unprepared for it**.

And when they end up in these less-than-ideal environments having to adapt to these less-than-ideal circumstances… they don't know what to do.

What usually happens, then, is one of two things:

1. They will make the wrong decision, fail to properly adapt to the scenario they have been placed in, and end up straying too far from their intended diet. Or, at least straying further than they truly should have, to a degree that hinders their progress in some way.

2. They will make the right decision and adapt correctly (or make a neutral decision that is neither right nor wrong, good nor bad) to the scenario they have been placed in, BUT, instead of realizing this, they'll often assume that they did something "wrong" or "bad" and feel guilty and start mentally beating themselves up about it, which then opens the doors to a variety of much worse problems.

Sound familiar? It usually does.

And that brings us to our next obvious question: **what can we do to prevent all of this**?

Let's find out…

THE MYTH OF "MESSING UP"

Stop me when this sounds a little *too* familiar.

Things are going well for you. You're sticking to your diet and workout. Fat loss is happening at an ideal rate. Everything is good.

And then, out of nowhere, one of those less-than-ideal scenarios comes about.

It really doesn't matter what the specific scenario is, so feel free to imagine anything you'd like. It just needs to be something that takes you out of your normal dietary comfort zone and therefore puts you at a greater risk of eating more than you're supposed to.

Actually, you know what? It can even be a normal scenario within your comfort zone. However, for whatever reason, you have simply found yourself at risk of temporarily straying from your diet and eating more than you're supposed to.

And then… *you do*.

It happens.

You end up eating more than you're supposed to.

You've been so good with your diet up until this point. You've been so consistent. You've been doing a great job of eating the right total amount of calories and macronutrients each day and getting them from the right sources without any major problems or mistakes.

That is, until now.

Now, for whatever reason, you just ate more calories than you were supposed to.

Maybe a little more. Maybe a lot more. Maybe *a whole lot more*. We could be talking anywhere from a couple of hundred calories over your ideal total (e.g., eating 2200 when your goal was 2000), or even a thousand calories over your ideal total (e.g., eating 3000 when your goal was 2000). Hell, maybe even more than that.

Once again, the specifics don't matter. All that matters is that you had a goal amount of calories to eat, and you just went some degree over that goal amount.

GUESS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If you're like the vast majority of people in this world who are trying to lose fat and somehow find themselves in this common scenario, there is only one possible way to interpret what happened.

And that is: "**I messed up**."

That's right. You made a "mistake" and you "messed up."

Depending on your personality, current mood and overall psychological profile, you may even take it a step further and conclude that you didn't just "mess up." Rather… "*you failed*."

And from there, **varying degrees of guilt and self-hate will be experienced**.

All because you "messed up" by eating more calories than you were supposed to… thus causing untold amounts of damage to your progress.

Shame on you.

GUESS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? (VERSION 1)

Once the "mess up" has occurred and the feelings of guilt and self-hate are present, there are two different ways it will usually go.

The first involves a domino effect built entirely around the following illogical, self-sabotaging thought:

"I messed up a little and ate more than I was supposed to… therefore, today is ruined… therefore, I might as well overeat even more and completely ruin everything… because it doesn't matter anymore… because I already messed things up anyway."

And from there, instead of having just gone *a little* over your intended calorie intake, you end up going *a lot* over your intended calorie intake.

So what was maybe just a few hundred calories too many now becomes double, or triple, or quadruple that. Often even more. Sometimes much, much more.

This kind of thing happens all the time. Someone overeats by 100, 200, 300, 400 or 500 calories or something similar, assumes they ruined everything, and proceeds to turn that small amount of overeating into thousands (yes, literally *thousands*) of calories of overeating.

Sometimes this mindset is so bad that it extends past that one problematic day and turns into: "I messed up yesterday, so this whole week doesn't even matter anymore. No point in sticking to my diet today. Or tomorrow. Or the next day. This week is already a lost cause."

Happens all the time.

GUESS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? (VERSION 2)

The people in the previous scenario will usually end up here next.

In addition, there is another group of people that will fortunately skip right over the illogical thought process we just discussed. Sure, they'll still realize they "messed up," but they'll let it end right there and immediately return to their intended diet. Unfortunately, however, the guilt and self-hate remain.

And that brings us to the next fun step in this conveyor belt of crazy, which involves witnessing the negative results of their "mess up" and having it worsen that aforementioned guilt and self-hate.

Here, let me set the scene. Imagine this…

You messed up. You ate some degree more than you were supposed to. And then, the next day arrives. What do you do?

You weigh yourself!

And what do you see?

Weight gain!

And what do you think?

"Dammit, I gained weight!! I messed up yesterday and ate too much, and now I've already gained a few pounds of fat!! I knew this would happen! Dammit! [Insert the various terrible things people think to themselves when they're in a guilty, self-hating state.]"

And then maybe you take off some clothes and look at yourself in the mirror.

And what do you see?

New body fat! You can actually see the difference! You look softer. And flabbier. And fatter. And less toned. You can even pinch the areas of your body where this new fat was gained and *feel* the difference.

And then what?

Maybe you also notice that your clothes feel a little tighter. And various measurements you might be taking (e.g., waist) have increased. And on and on and on.

And the guilt and self-hate continue to grow.

All of the signs are there. You can literally see it and feel it. It's pretty clear what has happened.

You messed up, and now you're suffering the consequences. Not only did you prevent yourself from losing fat (like you were supposed to be doing), but you went and gained *additional* fat. Now you've given yourself more work to do, thus making it take even longer before you get to where you want to be. All because you couldn't stick to your diet like you were supposed to.

More guilt. More self-hate.

And you will feel like shit every single time you look at the scale (maybe multiple times throughout the day to see if anything magically changed, and/or every time you weigh yourself in the following days), or see yourself in the mirror, or put on certain clothes, or take measurements, or even just think about how big of a failure you are for doing this to yourself.

More guilt. More self-hate.

You messed up. You overate. You gained body fat. You failed.

More guilt. More self-hate.

GUESS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

At this wonderful point, there's a few different ways things will go…

- In some cases, the person will get back on track with their diet and continue to make good progress. That is, until the next time this scenario occurs, at which point they'll repeat this whole "I messed up" process all over again… possibly feeling progressively guiltier and filled with even more self-hate with each subsequent occurrence.

- In many other cases, the person will go off of their diet for an extended period of time. Potentially for a very extended period of time. Potentially even giving up altogether and returning to their previous eating (and exercise) habits.

- In other cases, the person will turn to some stupid fad diet in an attempt to "quickly" lose the new fat they just unintentionally gained. And when that doesn't work, they'll turn to some other stupid fad diet. And when that doesn't work… another. And on and on and on. Until ending up in the previous scenario of giving up altogether.

- In other cases, the person will turn to a much stricter diet instead. Something with more rules and limitations on what they can and can't do, and what they can and can't eat… most (if not all) of which will involve doing a lot of unnecessary disproven nonsense. And while they may assume this additional strictness is going to be the key to preventing them from ever "messing up like this again" in the future, the reality is that it's going to have the opposite effect. More restriction = less preferable = less enjoyable = less convenient = less sustainable = much more likely to reach a dietary breaking point in the near future.

- In the most extreme cases, eating disorders will develop. Maybe involving purging (throwing up the food that was just overeaten). Maybe involving severe restriction (overeating followed by extreme undereating… essentially bingeing and restricting). Maybe body image disorders develop, too. Maybe other mental health problems. Maybe even some degree of physical self-harm takes place. All of which is progressively worsened each time it happens.

DOES ANY OF THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

If you've ever made any attempt at losing any amount of body fat before, chances are that at least some part of this sounded a little familiar to you.

Chances are that you've experienced some (or all) of these scenarios, thought some (or all) of these thoughts, or reacted in some (or all) of these ways.

It's okay.

Most people have.

As terrible as it all is, it's extremely common. And it's one of the many reasons why people end up failing.

That's the bad news.

The good news, however, **is that there's a surprisingly simple solution**. A way to prevent this entire scenario from ever happening.

No, not by "never messing up in the first place." That sounds good on paper, but it's unrealistic in the real world.

Instead, the solution is to understand that the entire concept of "messing up" – that initial negative thought that forms in your head whenever you eat more than you were supposed to eat, or eat something that you weren't supposed to eat – **is complete bullshit**.

THE CONCEPT OF "MESSING UP" IS BULLSHIT

That's right. Say it with me: it's… all… **bullshit**.

From the initial thought, to every thought that follows it, to every feeling that accompanies each one of those thoughts, to every observation being made and used as supposed confirmation that these thoughts and feelings are warranted… **it's all complete bullshit**.

None of it is based on anything remotely legitimate.

So when you think you've "messed up" by eating more than you were supposed to eat (or eating something that you weren't supposed to eat), and assume you've now done something that will stop your fat loss progress, or cause you to gain body fat, or just directly have some meaningful negative effect on your results… **the reality is that *it won't***.

Which means that all of the destructive thoughts, feelings and reactions that follow this assumption are not remotely legitimate either.

How can this all be true, you ask?

How can this be right?

Well, in order to understand how, all you will need is a tiny bit of math and logical thinking.

3500 CALORIES = 1 POUND OF FAT

In the very first chapter of this book, I briefly mentioned that 1 pound of body fat contains roughly 3500 calories.

Meaning, when you are in a caloric surplus and therefore consuming more calories than your body needs, it will store 3500 of those extra calories inside a single pound of fat.

Why does this matter?

Because this means that your body will NOT gain one full pound of new body fat unless you supply it with 3500 excess calories. And note that I'm not saying you need to *eat* 3500 calories, I'm saying you need to eat 3500 calories *more* than your maintenance level.

Let me repeat that so it's as clear as possible.

You'd have to eat 3500 calories *above your maintenance level* for a single pound of body fat to be gained.

So, for example, if your maintenance level is 2500 calories, you'd have to eat 6000 calories today in order for one legitimate pound of fat to be gained by tomorrow. Yes, *6000 calories*.

In fact, if you want to get technical about it, **it would actually take more than 3500 calories above your maintenance level for one full pound of fat to be gained**. This is because some of those excess calories would be burned off due to factors like an increased Thermic Effect of Food and upregulated NEAT, plus the fact that not all of the excess calories you consume get stored as body fat (i.e., some portion of it can be stored as muscle, even more so if you're doing some form of intelligent weight training at the time).

But you know what? Let's ignore this for the sake of keeping things as simple as possible and continue to assume 3500 calories above maintenance causes one pound of fat to be gained, even though it's actually more complicated than that. (Bonus Fact: For similar reasons as I just explained, a 3500-calorie deficit isn't always going to cause one pound of fat to be lost.)

So, let's think about this practically.

How does this all work out in the real world? Here are three examples…

EXAMPLE #1

Okay.

You "messed up." You ate more than you were supposed to.

It happened.

Now, what happened *exactly*? Well, for this example, we're going to pretend you ate **300 calories** more than you were supposed to. How big of a negative effect is that going to have on your results?

Let's use that math and logical thinking to find out.

First, remember that you are supposed to be in a deficit. So, let's pretend your maintenance level is 2500 calories and you're eating 2000 calories per day to be in that deficit (again, this is just an example).

But, wait! Oh no!! You "messed up" today and ate 300 calories more than you were supposed to! That's 2300 calories consumed instead of 2000! Oh no!! This is terrible!!! You overate!!! You failed at your diet!!! You gained a ton of fat!!! The sky is falling!! The world is ending!!

Um, *no*.

In this example scenario, *you didn't actually gain any fat at all*. In fact, you didn't even overeat enough to take yourself out of your deficit on that day, which means you STILL *lost fat*!

So not only did you not even come remotely close to eating the insane 6000 calories you'd need to have eaten in this example (2500 + 3500 = 6000) for one actual pound of actual fat to be gained (let alone "tons of fat"), you didn't even eat enough to cancel out your deficit for that one day. Sure, you ended up with a smaller deficit than you intended to have, but who cares? There is still a deficit present despite the fact that you "messed up."

Wow, what a terrible "mess up" that truly was. You "messed up" enough to still lose fat just fine.

What an absolute failure!

Please note my sarcasm there.

And please note what really happened here vs what most people will think happened.

In reality, what happened, *is nothing*. But the average person will not think that. They'll instead think they "messed up" in some significant way. And that thought will start their journey down the illogical rabbit hole we went through before. You know, the one that involves thinking things like "today is clearly ruined now, so it doesn't matter how much additional overeating I do." Which then causes the person to go from a scenario where everything is still fine and nothing detrimental

actually happened, to a self-created scenario where they're now eating thousands of additional calories due to faulty self-sabotaging logic.

And thus a complete non-problem becomes a potential real problem.

And let's not forget the unwarranted guilt and self-hate that comes about as a result of this illogical thought process. The kind of guilt and self-hate that causes a person to mentally beat themselves up until a variety of (often much worse) problems are created, all because they think they "messed up" in some big way. In reality, of course, that "big way" is so laughably insignificant that it won't have any meaningful negative impact on their results whatsoever. But they'll be much too busy considering themselves as failures and unnecessarily turning the "mess up" into a bigger problem to actually see that.

But wait, what's that you say?

The person in this example only overate by 300 calories. What if they "messed up" bigger than that? Okay…

Let's get out the math and logical thinking once again.

EXAMPLE #2

Let's say our same example person overate by **500 calories** instead, which is enough to wipe out their entire deficit for that day. How much of a negative effect is that going to have on their results?

Well, assuming they still maintain their intended deficit throughout the rest of the week (which may not happen if they start going down the "I messed up" path to self-destruction), they will STILL not gain any fat whatsoever. In fact, they'll STILL lose a nice amount of fat that week.

Think about it. If they still have their intended 500-calorie deficit in place on the other six days of the week, they still end up with a total weekly deficit of 3000 calories instead of the 3500 they would have had if they didn't "mess up" that one day.

So, in this case, the HUGE negative effect this "mess up" has on their results is… um… *continued fat loss progress*. Granted, it's a super tiny bit lesser this week than it otherwise would have been, but they're still going to lose fat just fine.

Oh no! What a terrible "mess up" that was! How will you live with yourself! (Again, sarcasm.)

And the same damn thing would have happened if they overate by 600 calories instead of 500. Or 700. Or 800. Or 900. **In any similar example, as long as they got back on track with their diet the very next day, they would have still ended up losing fat that week despite "messing up" to this degree.**

Unfortunately, they'll usually be too busy feeling guilty, hating themselves, and turning nothing into something to actually realize this.

But wait…

What's that you're saying now?

What if our example person overeats by much more than this? Like… WAY more.

What if their "mess up" is really, *really* bad?

Time for some more math and logical thinking…

EXAMPLE #3

Let's say our example person overeats by… 1000 calories. Hell, let's say they overeat by… 2000 calories. You know what? Let's take this shit to the next level. Let's say they overeat by a whopping **4000 calories**.

Yeah, seriously.

So, they were supposed to eat 2000 calories to be in their ideal deficit, but they "messed up" and ate 6000 calories instead.

Yes, *6000 calories*. A feat many people wouldn't be able to accomplish in a single day even if they purposely tried to. But that's okay. Let's use it as an example of a "worst-case scenario."

How much of a negative effect is that going to have on their results?

Well, we know there's roughly 3500 calories in one pound of fat. We also know that if their maintenance level is 2500 calories, and they ate 6000 calories, they'd have a surplus of exactly 3500 calories.

Which means… they will end up gaining… **one**… **entire**… **pound**… **of**… **fat**.

HOLY SH… wait a second.

One pound of fat?

That's it?!?

Yes.

That's it.

If you "mess up" so badly that you end up in this worst-case scenario of eating a massive (and unlikely) 4000 calories *more* than you were supposed to, you'd gain just one pound of body fat in this example.

Yup.

One itty-bitty pound.

One teeny-tiny pound.

One single baby-sized insignificant pound.

Big… **effing**… **deal**.

Now, obviously, this isn't a positive thing that has happened here.

And, obviously, it's something you don't want to happen often.

Ideally, *never at all*.

But, even still, **as long as you get right back on track with your diet and return to your intended calorie intake (and intended caloric deficit) in the subsequent days, you'll wipe out most (if not all) of that unintentional surplus and probably break even at maintenance for the week.** Hell, in some cases, you may STILL end up in a tiny deficit for the week depending on the size of the daily deficit you're using.

Which means that even if you did legitimately gain one full pound of fat as a result of such a massive (and unrealistic) "mess up," **you will have lost that fat (and potentially even more) by this time next week**.

Think about that for a second.

What I've just described is a ***worst-case scenario***.

Take note of how insignificant it is. Take note of how non-existent the damage is.

Really let it sink in.

And also remind yourself of how this scenario involved a person eating an insane 4000 calories more than they were supposed to in a single day… which is a degree of "messing up" that most people will never even come close to reaching in the first place. Typically, it's much, much less than that.

Yet, even still, look at how minor the effect was. Look at how inconsequential the consequences of a "worst-case-scenario" are.

Really take a second and let it sink in.

This is why the title of this section is "The Myth Of 'Messing Up.'"

People occasionally have these instances where they eat more than they were supposed to eat during one of their meals, or eat more than they were supposed to eat during one of their days, or eat a food/food group they deemed "evil" and weren't supposed to eat, or whatever the hell else, and automatically assume something really bad has happened because of it. Something that is going to have a meaningful negative effect on their results.

But that, as you can hopefully see by now, is nothing more than a myth.

The truth is, these types of singular, *infrequent* "mess ups" only REALLY become a problem when they *aren't infrequent*. Or when we simply think of them as something that they aren't, and then let guilt, self-hate and illogical thinking turn a meaningless non-problem into something that is actually capable of having a truly significant negative effect on you and your results.

But wait, what's that you're saying now?

"BUT THE NEXT DAY, THE SCALE SHOWED THAT I GAINED FAT!"

Uh huh, I see.

What I just explained sounds nice, but it doesn't explain how you can overeat a little one day and then see yourself gain anywhere from 1-5 pounds the next day. Sometimes even more.

If what I'm saying is true (and it is), and it's virtually impossible for someone to "mess up" enough in a single meal or a single day to gain any remotely meaningful amount of fat (or any at all, for

that matter), then how do I explain the significant amount of weight gain you ALWAYS see the day(s) after "messing up"?

Simple.

It's not body fat.

Taaadaaa!

Sure, you will gain a little weight when you overeat. That's definitely real. You're not imagining it. If your scale shows that your body weight is a few pounds higher the next day, that's legit. It is.

But… *it's not body fat*.

It's just a combination of ***temporary* water weight**, ***temporarily* replenished muscle glycogen stores**, and the ***temporary* weight of additional food in your stomach waiting to be digested**.

That's right… it's the exact same thing that I said would happen after refeeds, calorie cycling, and diet breaks.

Basically, any time you eat more than you normally eat (especially involving a higher than normal intake of carbs and/or sodium… more about that later), you will always see some *temporary* weight gain take place.

Granted, refeeds, calorie cycling and diet breaks are all planned and controlled forms of overeating, and it's done for a specific beneficial purpose… whereas now we're talking about unplanned, uncontrolled forms of overeating for no real purpose whatsoever.

But, that doesn't matter. Regardless of the reason, the same temporary weight gain is going to happen either way.

So, when you step on the scale the morning after "messing up" and think "Wow, I really messed up yesterday!! I ate too much and already gained 3 lbs of fat today!!" and then use that as confirmation of the fact that you DID indeed mess up as badly as you thought you did and are therefore justified in stressing, obsessing, freaking out, feeling guilty and hating yourself… **DON'T**!

It's… not… fat.

You gained 3-temporary-pounds of water, glycogen and stomach content. *That's it*.

Once again, unless you overate by 10,500 calories over your maintenance level (which would mean eating 13,000 calories in a single day using our same example from before), *you didn't actually gain 3 lbs of fat*. You gained some temporary non-fat weight that will be gone within a couple of days of returning to your normal diet.

Don't let it bother you. It's meaningless.

"BUT I LOOK AND FEEL FATTER TOO!"

If what I just explained is true, and the weight you gain is not actually body fat, then how do I explain the fact that you also look and feel fatter as well?

You see it in the mirror. You feel it in the way your clothes fit. You can even measure the difference with a tape measure.

If you didn't gain fat, then why do you look and feel like you did?

Two reasons:

1. **The first is that all of the *temporary* weight you gained WILL *temporarily* affect the way your body looks, because fat isn't the only substance that shows itself visually when you gain it.** Meaning, you can *see* water retention. It will temporarily make you look "softer" and less toned/defined, just like fat. You can even feel it. This all makes it extremely easy to mistake water retention for fat gain. In addition, having more food in your stomach than usual waiting to be digested will cause your stomach to expand to some degree (it's why people loosen their belts after a big meal). And, as I mentioned earlier, replenished glycogen stores will make your muscles temporarily look "fuller."

   Any or all of this is capable of making you temporarily "look" and "feel" fatter even though you aren't. It can also make your clothes fit tighter. And, if you're taking measurements, it can make those increase as well. Guess what else? The way most people will mentally freak out after seeing this weight gain (followed by wrongly assuming it's fat when it's not) will lead to stress. And stress will lead to increased cortisol levels. And that will lead to increased water retention, which will lead to *additional* (and/or *longer lasting*) weight gain. And that will lead to the person thinking *even more* fat was gained (when it wasn't)… and that will lead to *even more* stress… and that will lead to *even more* water retention… on and on and on. The illogical circle continues.

2. **The second is simply your mind playing tricks on you.**
   Yes, all of the above is true and real, and it's normal to see and feel it. However, in addition to that, our own minds are capable of making things worse. Sometimes much worse. Especially when we get the idea in our heads that we "messed up." Because if we truly believe we did something that will negatively affect the way our bodies look, then guess what? *We're going to see that negative effect regardless of whether it's legitimately there or not*. Behold the potentially destructive power of the human brain once illogical thinking has been allowed in.

So, if you eat more than you normally do and then see and feel some kind of difference the next day, that's perfectly normal. However, you need to realize that what you're seeing and feeling is A) not actually body fat, and B) only temporary… it will be gone soon after returning to your normal diet. Don't let it bother you. It's meaningless.

THE POINT(S)

So, what's the big take home message here?

Two things…

First, whenever you end up in one of these less-than-ideal scenarios (or even just a typically ideal scenario that somehow went awry), and you end up eating more than you were supposed to eat during a meal or the entire day as a whole (or anything similar), and you think "I messed up," **stop yourself right there and realize that you didn't**.

When you start thinking various illogical, guilt-ridden, self-hating, self-sabotaging thoughts, **stop yourself right there and realize just how illogical those thoughts really are**.

And when you start thinking that you probably just destroyed your diet, killed your progress, failed at your goals and/or gained a bunch of fat because of this "mess up," **stop yourself right there and realize that nothing bad actually happened**. You're fine. Your progress is fine. Your results are fine. Your body is fine. Your diet is fine. Everything is fine. No remotely significant damage was done AT ALL. Not even a little. Most likely nothing whatsoever. Hell, chances are you're still going to end up *losing fat* this week anyway. And any weight gain you might see or feel in the next day or two is due to nothing more than a temporary gain in water, glycogen and stomach content… not body fat.

The second important take home message here is that the only way you can really, truly "mess up" on your diet so much so that it has a significant detrimental effect on your results is **by**

regularly* failing to eat the right total amount of calories and macronutrients each day *over a consistent period of time.

Meaning… one occasionally "messed up" meal *is nothing*.

One occasionally "messed up" day *is nothing*.

These rare one-off instances of "messing up" *are nothing*.

As long as you get right back to your ideal diet and eating habits afterwards rather than feeling guilty, hating yourself and letting it turn into something bigger and/or worse, you (and your progress) will be just fine.

Basically, as long as the *majority* of your meals are what they're supposed to be, and the *majority* of your days are what they're supposed to be, the occasional "mess up" will be so insignificant in the grand scheme of things that it becomes hard to even justify calling it "messing up" in the first place.

CALORIE BALANCING

Now I'd like to introduce you to a very simple and (surprise!) very logical concept that I've spent nearly a decade referring to as "*calorie compensation*."

While I've always felt that term had a really nice ring to it, I've kinda been trying to avoid using it.

Why? Because of the word "compensation." In this context, it tends to have a negative connotation attached to it. The idea that you're "compensating" for something just isn't viewed as an entirely positive thing, and I want to avoid anything that could possibly cause someone to view a potentially positive dietary concept that way.

"*Calorie borrowing*" is another term I've seen people (namely, Eric Helms) use when discussing this concept. While that's probably better than "compensating," I still feel like there's something negative attached to it. After all, borrowing something implies that you then owe something, and that's usually not something people view positively either. At least, not entirely positively.

"*Calorie balancing*," on the other hand, seems like the best choice of all. If something is a little higher than normal, you simply make something else a little lower to balance it out. That sounds pretty good. There's nothing inherently negative about balance. In fact, balance is damn near universally viewed as a good thing. At least… by sane people.

And so, here we are… with a *completely pointless* introduction to a concept that is anything but. And that is a little something called **calorie balancing**.

WHAT IS CALORIE BALANCING?

It's exactly what it sounds like…

It's eating fewer calories than you would have normally eaten at some point during the course of a day or a week, so that you can then eat proportionately more calories at some point later on (or vice-versa). In the end, everything still "balances" out and your total calorie intake remains what it was supposed to be.

There are primarily two ways for this concept to be applied:

1. Within a single day.
2. Within a week.

Let's take a look at both.

SINGLE-DAY BALANCING

Let's say today is a little different than a normal day usually is for you. Instead of being in your typical everyday dietary world, today something different is happening.

Different how, exactly?

Maybe you're going out to dinner at a restaurant. Maybe there's a party. Maybe it's a holiday. Maybe you're celebrating some kind of special occasion. Maybe you're eating socially. Maybe there's some big family meal taking place. Maybe you're going on a date. Maybe you're eating something you really like and don't get to eat very often. Maybe it's any combination of the above or something else altogether.

Whatever it may be, let's just say that at some point today, you are expecting yourself to be in a situation that will either:

A. Involve eating a meal that will make you more likely to overeat and exceed your intended calorie intake for that meal… *and you want to prevent that from happening*.

B. Make you simply *want* to be *allowed* to eat more than you usually do in this meal, and do so in a way that is guilt-free and won't interfere with your fat loss progress at all.

C. Both.

Well, **with calorie balancing, this is all completely doable**.

All you would have to do is eat some amount less at some other point in the day than you usually do, thus giving you more room (and more calories) to eat at this other point.

That's **single-day balancing**.

Confused? Here's an example…

EXAMPLE

Let's say some example person figured out that they need to be eating **2000** calories per day to be in their ideal deficit and lose weight at their ideal rate. This, as always, is just a random example.

Now let's pretend that on most days, they usually eat **4** meals per day – breakfast, lunch, a snack and then dinner – because that is what best suits their preferences and schedule (again, this is just an example).

To keep things as simple as possible, let's also pretend they normally eat an even **500** calories in each of those 4 meals, thus reaching their goal of 2000 total calories for the day.

Now let's say they have some special dinner planned for tonight. It could be any of the example scenarios I just mentioned, or anything else that is remotely similar.

Whatever it is, **they just know that it's a dinner that will not be well suited for fitting within their usual 500-calorie allotment**. Maybe there will be too many yummy foods they love, maybe a dessert they love, who knows. Whatever it is, they just know they won't be happy (or likely) to restrict themselves to the 500 calories they would normally be eating during this meal.

But… *1000 calories*? 1000 calories would be awesome!

And this is completely doable. (By the way, this could have just as easily been 800 calories or 1200 calories or anything similar. We're just using 1000 for this example.)

All this example person would need to do is eat 500 fewer calories at some earlier point in the day so they have an extra 500 calories to eat during this meal.

To do this with our example person's example setup, they could eat about 167 fewer calories in each of their 3 previous meals (which for them is breakfast, lunch and a snack). Why? Because 167 x 3 = the 500 (okay, 501) extra calories they were looking for.

This same person could simply eat their usual breakfast and lunch but then eliminate their "snack" meal entirely and create 500 extra calories for dinner that way.

Basically, as long as their total calorie intake balances out to what it's supposed to be at the end of the day, they can put more calories in certain meals and less calories in certain meals, and do so in countless different combinations to make things work out however the hell they need/want them to on any given day.

And what if the example scenario had them wanting/needing to eat more calories during an earlier meal (let's say breakfast) instead of dinner?

Easy. They'd balance things the same way, just the other way around. Meaning, eat X calories more during breakfast, and then the same X calories less at some point later on.

As long as it all balances out at the end of the day, the person will end up happy because A) they weren't forced to restrict themselves as much as usual during a special/enjoyable meal, and B) they got to do it guilt-free and without interfering with their fat loss progress in any way whatsoever.

That's win-win.

(Note: This approach could also be used if a person happened to *unintentionally* eat more in a meal than they were intending to. Just adjust the other meals so that everything still balances out in the end.)

MULTI-DAY BALANCING

Now imagine if you took everything you just learned about single-day balancing, and put it in the context of a week instead of a day.

That's **multi-day balancing**.

Confused? Here's an example, and if you remember the sections about refeeds and calorie cycling from earlier (head injury be damned!), you're definitely going to notice some similarities…

EXAMPLE

Let's take our same example person from before. They are eating **2000** calories per day to be in their ideal deficit and lose weight at their ideal rate. Cool.

This means that they eat a total of **14,000** calories per week (2000 x 7 days = 14,000). Obviously, their usage of refeed days or calorie cycling will change things (i.e., they'll have higher/lower calorie days, so they won't be eating 2000 calories each day after all), but let's ignore that for the purpose of keeping this example as simple as possible. The same concept would apply regardless.

Now let's say some sort of special occasion is happening later this week. A holiday. A party. A wedding. An event. A trip. Whatever.

Something that will either A) increase their likelihood of exceeding their intended 2000 calorie intake for the day, B) make them *want* to be *allowed* to eat more than their intended 2000 calorie intake AND do it in a way that is guilt-free and has no impact on their fat loss progress, or C) both.

And let's say that eating **1000** additional calories is the amount that sounds good to them for making this happen (so, they will eat **3000** calories that day instead of 2000).

Once again, this is completely doable.

All they'd have to do is eat fewer calories on some or all of the six other days of the week so that they can have these additional 1000 calories available on that one day… but yet still end up at the same 14,000 weekly total.

That could mean eating 167 fewer calories (1833 instead of 2000) on all six days (since 167 x 6 = 1002). It could mean eating 250 fewer calories (1750 instead of 2000) on just four days and their normal 2000 on the other two (since 250 x 4 = 1000). Or it could mean making any of the countless other adjustments they could make to create the extra 1000 calories they want for this one day and still balance it out to end up at their intended 14,000 calorie total for the week.

Yup, this is basically the exact same thing we did to balance out our total weekly calorie intake when including a refeed day.

It's the same line of thinking, only in this case you're not overeating for the strategic benefits of a refeed (although, fun fact: the same benefits will be present anyway). Rather, you're overeating because a situation is going to occur in which doing so will make you happy and/or less likely to *unintentionally* overeat. **You're just planning for it in advance and adjusting to counterbalance it.**

EXPECT SHORT-TERM BODY WEIGHT CHANGES TO OCCUR WITH MULTI-DAY BALANCING

Hopefully this isn't going to come as a surprise to you at this point, but, when you use this multi-day calorie balancing method to eat more on one day than you normally do, you can expect to see some kind of *temporary* increase in body weight the day (or two) after.

Yet again, **this is not body fat**.

This is the same *temporary* increase in water weight, glycogen and food in your stomach waiting to be digested that we've talked about many, many times already. Relax and don't worry about it at all.

WHAT ABOUT MULTI-DAY BALANCING FROM THE REVERSE PERSPECTIVE?

As in, what if you "messed up" today and *unintentionally* ate more calories than you were supposed to? Can you simply eat proportionately less calories tomorrow (or divide it up evenly over the course of the next few days) to balance things out?

Yes, of course. The line of thinking here is completely correct and completely logical.

However, **it's still NOT something I actually recommend doing in most cases**.

Why not, you ask? Three reasons:

1. **The first is because of everything I already explained about the myth of "messing up."** As long as it's something that's not happening often, it's not going to have any meaningful negative effect on your progress no matter how bad the "mess up" seemed. Therefore, there's no reason to waste your time adjusting to counterbalance it. The only thing you should be focusing on at that point is getting back on track with your diet the very next day rather than feeling guilty or mentally beating yourself up. Because, as long as you do that successfully, you (and your progress) will be perfectly fine.

   Now, what if that last part doesn't actually happen? And "messing up" becomes more than an infrequent occurrence? And you're overeating often and/or consistently enough to actually have a negative effect on your progress? Well, at that point, the usage of multi-day calorie balancing definitely becomes more justified. HOWEVER, using this approach this way would only be treating a symptom of a much bigger problem, *which is overall noncompliance*. For this reason, in this scenario, my only recommendation would be to put all of your focus into making the necessary adjustments to your diet, habits, lifestyle or whatever else so that the underlying problem itself gets solved and this "symptom" of regularly overeating gets solved along with it. That, above all else, is what's really important here. Not to mention…

2. Let's pretend someone has a maintenance level of 2500 calories and they are eating 2000 calories per day to be in a 20% deficit. Now let's pretend that on Saturday, they unintentionally overate by 1000 calories (so 3000 instead of 2000). Now let's say they decided to under-eat by 1000 calories on Sunday to "cancel it out" (doing this over a span of a few days would certainly be a more logical choice than just doing it on Sunday alone, but this is fat loss we're talking about here – a person's ability to think logically is usually replaced with "I failed!!!! I need to fix it ASAP!!!!"). Now, on paper, this seems perfect. 1000 calories over

on Saturday, 1000 calories under on Sunday. The total weekly calories balance out in the end and all is right with the world.

But what most people won't take into account when having this thought is just how tough it's going to be for them in the real world to eat 1000 calories below their intended calorie intake (which is *already* 20% below maintenance for a deficit to *already* exist). In this example, that would mean eating *1000 total calories* on Sunday instead of the 2000 they are accustomed to eating. How do you think that's going to go? The answer is *not very well*.

Why? Because this qualifies as the same type of over-restriction (an excessively large deficit that is 60% below maintenance) that we purposely avoided earlier when setting our calorie intake. Do you remember why we avoided it? Because of how hard it would be to actually make it happen due to the extreme hunger (among other problems… including a higher potential for suboptimal macronutrient and/or micronutrient intake that day since the total amount of food is being so heavily restricted) it will cause. So now we have someone trying to eat 1000 calories on Sunday who will A) hate every second of it, and B) become so over-hungry that their odds of overeating/bingeing (and therefore ending up in a surplus just like they were on Saturday) will be higher than their odds of actually eating the stupid 1000 calories they are attempting to eat. Or, maybe they'll manage to pull off eating 1000 calories that day but then be so over-hungry on Monday that they'll exceed their intended 2000 calorie intake yet again and then restart the cycle from the beginning (excessively restricting on Tuesday to balance out Monday, etc. etc. etc.). And thus, a negative pattern emerges. Speaking of which…

3. Because this mindset can quickly take a turn for the worse in terms of obsession and constantly adjusting from one day to the next for meaningless mistakes and "mess ups," and potentially falling into a pattern of overeating/bingeing followed by over-restricting.

For all of these reasons, I don't think most people should use multi-day calorie balancing in this manner.

ONE POTENTIAL PROBLEM (AND SIMPLE SOLUTION)

One final thing worth mentioning here is that, in some cases, eating less earlier in the day or eating less earlier in the week than a person is accustomed to doing (for the purpose of giving themselves more room to eat later on) can create one small problem.

It can make them **extra hungry** in the period of time leading up to that higher calorie meal/day that they're preemptively eating less to balance out.

Which means, by the time that higher calorie meal/day comes, they could potentially be so **extra hungry** that they end up eating even more than the extra amount they purposely allowed themselves to eat.

Fortunately, there's an easy way to avoid this. **And that is by avoiding going TOO low in calories in the meals/days leading up to that one higher calorie meal/day.**

In addition, ensuring that you still eat sufficient amounts of protein and fiber (i.e., vegetables) during those earlier periods will help significantly with keeping you full and preventing over-hunger.

THE 5-POINT SCALE FOR APPROACHING LESS-THAN-IDEAL SITUATIONS

At this point, you understand the illogicality behind the thought of "messing up" and you've seen the usefulness of calorie balancing. This, combined with every other relevant guideline contained within this book, should go pretty far in helping you to sustain your diet in the real world and thus go on to reach your goals and permanently maintain them.

Now I want to provide you with one additional tool that puts a lot of it together.

It's a little something I like to call **The 5-Point Scale For Approaching Less-Than-Ideal Situations**.

That just rolls off the tongue, doesn't it?

And what this is is a look at the 5 most common ways a person trying to lose fat will react when being placed in the types of less-than-ideal scenarios we've been talking about (e.g., holidays, parties, eating out, social gatherings, etc.).

They are:

1. Complete avoidance.
2. Excessive restriction.
3. Controlled enjoyment.
4. Relaxed enjoyment.
5. Excessive indulgence.

It is my hope that the following will give you a much better perspective on the right and wrong ways for YOU to react when you find yourself in these situations.

Ready?

Let the fun begin…

1. COMPLETE AVOIDANCE

Remember earlier when I jokingly mentioned that sticking to your diet is easy as long as you lock yourself in a room and avoid the outside world entirely?

Well, *this is the closest thing to that*.

This is when you don't just make your diet a major focus in your life, **this is when you make it the ONLY focus in your life… *and do so at the expense of everything else in it***.

That means never eating out at all. Avoiding parties. Never celebrating holidays. Turning down invitations. Avoiding eating with friends or family. Having little to no social life because you're scared you might end up in a less-than-ideal dietary scenario. And so on.

Rather than trying to sustain your diet in the real world, you simply avoid the real world altogether – *to an unhealthy degree* – in the hope that doing so will allow you to be 100% "perfect" with your diet.

Or, maybe because you're under the impression that being 100% "perfect" with your diet is the ONLY way for it to ever work, and taking things to this much of an extreme is the only way to accomplish that.

In some cases, the person may actually pretend to enjoy this lifestyle, mostly so they appear sane, normal and happy in front of the few people they occasionally still remain in contact with. They may even legitimately feel superior to other people because of how "mentally strong" they are, how much willpower they have, and how dedicated they are to their diet/goals.

But, deep down, they hate it, and they'd much rather be less extreme. Unfortunately, they refuse to actually do that because they either A) don't think it's allowed, B) can't stand the idea of not being perfect, C) don't think it could ever work any other way, or D) don't realize that being less extreme is even a workable option in the first place.

For all of these reasons, their life is pretty miserable. And, often times, their health (mental, physical or both) is affected. Body image disorders and/or eating disorders (this level of extremeness is highly associated with massive binges and all sorts of other disordered eating characteristics) would be at a high risk of developing… if they haven't already… which they probably have.

This is not something that I'd recommend to anyone. Ever.

2. EXCESSIVE RESTRICTION

Now we move one level up to a place that is a lot better than the complete avoidance in #1, but still pretty harsh. And that is a place of *excessive restriction*.

So, now you actually venture out into the real world. You may sometimes prefer it if you hadn't (because that would make things easier), but you're thankfully saner than that.

So, you sometimes go out for dinner. You sometimes eat meals with friends and family. You attend parties. You celebrate holidays. You have some degree of social life. You're a normal, functional person.

That is, *until it's time to eat during these scenarios*.

Because then, there is an unnecessary and excessive level of strictness involved that prevents you from enjoying the scenario you're in. Occasionally, it may even prevent those around you from enjoying it, too.

For example, maybe you're the only person who shows up at a social gathering with your own container of pre-weighed, pre-planned, "good" food which you then awkwardly eat all by yourself. Maybe you sometimes have people over, but you're still weighing out your food on a scale (possibly even doing it in secret so no one else sees). Maybe you even bring your scale to restaurants or other people's houses. Maybe you force your social group to only eat at specific places rather than the places everyone else would prefer to eat at. And so on.

While these kinds of things do happen (I can personally remember trying to "secretly" weigh foods in my kitchen without my guests seeing me), the most common example of the excessive restriction found in this category simply involves **no dietary indulgence whatsoever**.

And no exceptions.

This is when you stick entirely to your (typically small) list of "good," "clean," "healthy," "allowed" foods 100% of the time – never even taking a single bite of anything else under any circumstance for any reason – usually out of some illogical fear that doing so will ruin your diet, hinder your progress, cause you to instantly gain a ton of fat (the myth of "messing up" strikes again), make you unhealthy, make you a failure, and on and on and on.

Therefore, you don't. Those types of foods are considered "bad" and are avoided *completely*.

It's essentially an all-or-nothing, black or white, good vs bad mindset… 100% of the time.

Which means people in this category will then proceed to not eat ANY of the yummy food that everyone else is eating and enjoying. They don't have a *single* Christmas cookie on Christmas. They're the only one avoiding ALL of the delicious food at restaurants and social gatherings because that food is not deemed perfectly "good" by their irrational standards. These are the people who constantly have to answer questions like "Really, you're not going to have *any*? But I thought you loved this?" when their grandmother (or whoever) offers them some of the food she cooked on some holiday, or a small slice of birthday cake, or whatever else.

And honestly, it wouldn't be THAT bad if this was all it was: just excessive restriction.

But remember, it's more than that.

It's excessive restriction *that prevents the person from enjoying the scenario they are in*.

Meaning, they WANT to eat these foods. They really, really, *really* want to. They DON'T want to be this strict with their diet in these scenarios, but they are unnecessarily forcing themselves to be anyway for whatever unwarranted reason.

And in doing so, it turns them into an annoyed, frustrated, unhappy, hungry person whose meal is ruined, whose holiday is ruined, whose time with family and friends is ruined, who people don't like being around because of how unreasonable their eating habits are and how annoying they get when trying to sustain them, and so on. *And this person HATES this*.

Even if they sometimes manage to outwardly act like it doesn't bother them, or that it's just proof of how dedicated they are to their diet/goals, or if they legitimately like the feeling of moral superiority they get from showing off their impressive willpower and self-control (yup, I've felt that feeling before), they still inwardly wish they could just relax *a little* and eat *some* of the yummy food around them without feeling bad about it. You know… like a *normal* person.

But they don't, which negatively affects their ability to enjoy these scenarios and be a mentally healthy and happy person within them. To the point where their overall quality of life can be affected in a similar way.

And that's probably not even the worst part. That distinction may go to what usually happens next.

Because, if you completely (and unnecessarily) restrict something long enough and severely enough – especially something that is both highly craved and constantly available – guess what's going to eventually happen?

A breaking point will be reached. And then comes the massive binge. Which is followed by even more excessive restriction… which is then followed by more massive binges. To not only the detriment of their fat loss progress (assuming they are even still on their diet at all anymore – many will have already given up by this point), but to the detriment of their mental and physical health.

Even worse?

If they weren't so overly and unnecessarily strict in the first place and allowed themselves to indulge *in moderation*, this outcome could have been avoided.

Speaking of which…

3. CONTROLLED ENJOYMENT (AKA MODERATION)

Listen. Your goal is to lose fat, which means there will ALWAYS be some degree of restriction being placed on what and how much you're eating. That's unavoidable.

But, that degree of restriction does NOT need to be as excessive as we just saw.

Rather… it can be somewhat *moderate*.

And that's where we've arrived now, at a place of moderation I like to call *controlled enjoyment*.

Now the myth of "messing up" is realized. Now the misconceptions regarding good foods vs bad foods are clear. Now the focus is less on over-avoidance and over-restriction, and more on *moderation*. Now it's less about every single individual meal and food choice being absolutely perfect, and more about total calorie, macronutrient and micronutrient intake being what it needs to be at the end of the day. Now it's understood that as long as the *majority* of those calories and macronutrients come from higher quality sources, it's perfectly fine if the *minority* of it comes from somewhere else. Now it's no longer 100/0. It's more like 90/10 or 80/20.

So, now when you're faced with these types of less-than-ideal scenarios…

- You're eyeballing/guessing serving sizes to the best of your ability.

- You're using your diet tracking app whenever possible to estimate/track calorie and macronutrient content as well as you realistically can, while ensuring everything fits within your intended daily totals (or as close to them as you can realistically get).
- You're usually *overestimating* a little on calorie content to play it safe and account for the various oils or butter or whatever else that was added to typical less-than-ideal foods to make them taste so damn yummy in the first place.
- You're eating a nice amount of protein and vegetables first and/or throughout the meal (ideal for controlling hunger), so you then become less likely to overindulge afterwards when you move on to fun stuff.
- You're drinking water throughout your meal for the same reason as above.
- You're making smarter choices that will improve your ability to indulge in moderation *while still staying within your intended calorie intake*. For example, you're choosing leaner cuts of meat. You're eating a filling, low-calorie salad before the less-filling, higher calorie foods. You're getting various sauces and dressings on the side to minimize the amount that is used (and thus minimize the extra calories it would contain). You're drinking only water (rather than anything that contains calories). You're not wasting calories eating the bread that was brought to your table before your meal at a restaurant or the cheese and cracker appetizer available at a social gathering (thus allowing you to eat more calories later from the foods you're *really* looking forward to eating). And other similar things.
- You're eating slower and taking the time to enjoy your meal rather than just trying to stuff yourself with as much tasty food as possible.
- You're using calorie balancing to make things better/easier for you when you need to.
- Now you're getting to indulge a little, and relax a little, and eat yummy foods, and have a good time, and enjoy yourself, and your meal, and the people you're with… all while continuing to stay in control of your diet (what you're eating, how much you're eating, etc.) and simply keeping things moderate and enjoyable while still working within your dietary guidelines.
- You're always monitoring what your body is doing (i.e., weighing yourself daily and paying attention to the weekly averages over a consistent period of time) to ensure that things are moving in the right direction at the rate they should be. If they are, you'll know you're good. But if they aren't, and you happened to have been in these types of less-than-ideal scenarios a lot during that period of time, you'll then know that your attempted version of "moderation"

wasn't quite moderate enough. So, you'll adjust from that point on, tighten things up, and do a better job (using all of the above suggestions) in the future. And you will continue to monitor what your body is doing to ensure that it's working. If it is, good job. But if it's still not, you need to take that as a sign that you should reduce the number of times you're allowing yourself to be in these types of less-than-ideal scenarios if you truly want to reach your fat loss goals (e.g., if you've been eating out three times per week, try cutting it back to just once).

For *most people*, I'd say this "controlled enjoyment" approach is ideal for the majority of the more common and frequent less-than-ideal scenarios a person will end up in. You know, normal stuff that occurs throughout the week or throughout the month (e.g., eating out at a restaurant, celebrating someone's birthday, going on a date, attending a backyard BBQ, etc.).

Are there any exceptions? Of course. As always, different people need and benefit from different things.

So, if you find that you can't make this approach work in these types of situations, take note of the advice I gave in that final bullet point above and either A) tighten up your version of "moderation," or B) reduce the number of times you're ending up in these scenarios.

"But I love eating out and going to parties and eating socially and being in these types of less-than-ideal situations as often as possible!"

I hear ya. But, you also want to lose fat, right? Well, if one is interfering with the other, you kinda need to just suck it up and decide which is more important to you.

4. RELAXED ENJOYMENT

Now take everything we just discussed in #3 (controlled enjoyment), and significantly lessen the "controlled" aspect of it.

When you've done that, you'll be right here… at a fun place I call *relaxed enjoyment*.

Now when you go into one of these less-than-ideal scenarios, you'll be going in with a mindset of **just relaxing and enjoying yourself, the food around you, and the people you're with**.

And that's it.

Sounds pretty nice, right? Trust me, it is.

To be clear, however, you're still not going COMPLETELY overboard here.

It's not like you're purposely setting out to try to break some kind of world record for eating or anything like that. You're *definitely NOT* going into crazy binge mode. Or eating yourself sick. Or anything resembling this.

But, you're also not really tracking anything, either.

Meaning, you're not counting, or weighing, or estimating, or using an app, or logging anything. You're not really going out of your way to restrict yourself too much, or keep track of your calorie and macronutrient intake, or keep that calorie and macronutrient intake within the ranges they are supposed to be in.

And, most importantly of all… **you're okay with this**.

You're not worrying about it, or obsessing over it, or stressing yourself out. You are just relaxing and enjoying yourself… *guilt-free*.

Sure, in the background of everything, you're still shooting to eat a good amount of protein and vegetables. That's always the right idea. And you may have used the multi-day balancing method to give yourself more room to consume extra calories on this day as well. **And, just in case it needs to be said, you will obviously be returning to your normal intended diet the very next day.**

But, beyond that, you're not actively doing anything but relaxing and enjoying yourself in a completely guilt-free manner where you don't feel bad about it or hate yourself afterwards.

At all.

Why? Because you understand that one rare day of relaxed eating enjoyment – which is then followed by an immediate return to your normal intended diet – is not going to have any meaningful negative impact on your fat loss results whatsoever.

Sounds pretty good, right? Again, it is.

And that brings us to an obvious question: when should this fun approach be used?

Well, for equally obvious reasons: *not very often*.

For *most* people, this "relaxed enjoyment" approach should be reserved strictly for the rarer, more special less-than-ideal scenarios only. Christmas would be a perfect example of this. Thanksgiving would be another. (Or whatever similar holidays you might celebrate instead.)

Just the very small handful of special days that come about very infrequently (e.g., Christmas is only once a year, Thanksgiving is only once a year) and typically involve getting together with your family and being around tons of yummy food that you really want to just relax and enjoy.

And in my opinion, in these types of rare, just-a-couple-of-times-a-year, family oriented scenarios, relaxing and enjoying is *exactly* what you should be doing.

Why? Two reasons.

1. The first is because, believe it or not, there is actually more to life than diets and fat loss progress. To quote Lyle McDonald's sarcasm: "*…50 years from now when you're old and decrepit, you'll know that it was worth it, sticking to your diet 365 days a year and never actually enjoying a moment of life*."

2. Second, because the other options most people will usually go with instead (complete avoidance or excessive restriction) will only serve to A) turn you into the type of annoyed, frustrated, unhappy, hungry person we talked about before, which will B) ruin this special occasion for you and the time spent with your family, and C) potentially cause you to go into a massive binge (sometimes lasting for days) at some point later on, which commonly occurs when people unnecessarily place excessive and/or unrealistic dietary restrictions on themselves.

That's why when people ask me things like "How do I stick to my diet during Christmas?" or "How do I avoid eating yummy awesome food on Thanksgiving?" or "How do I count calories when it's a big holiday meal with my family?" my answer is always the same…

YOU DON'T.

Taaadaaa!

Instead, *relax*. It's a once-a-year holiday. This is not the time to be worrying about diets and calories and macronutrients and serving sizes. This is the time to be eating tasty food and having fun with your family.

The next day? That's when you return to your normal diet and eating habits. As long as you do that, you'll be just fine.

"But I'll gain a ton of fat!!!"

No, you won't. Reread "The Myth Of 'Messing Up'" from earlier if you need to remind yourself why.

Sure, the fact that you will probably end up eating more calories, sodium and/or carbs than you normally do will mean you'll probably gain some weight the next day. But, as I explained before, this is just temporary water weight, replenished glycogen stores and stomach content. *Not fat*. And you'll lose it as soon as your diet returns to normal.

And, as an added bonus, one day of relaxed holiday eating will provide similar physiological and psychological benefits as a planned refeed would. (And, by the way, if you happen to have a planned refeed coming up, scheduling it on this type of day is a lovely idea.)

So, in these bigger, more special, once-a-year types of less-than-ideal scenarios, "relaxed enjoyment" is usually going to be the ideal way to approach it.

Now, are there ever any exceptions to this recommendation? Sure. Because, as usual, different people need and benefit from different things.

So, while most people will be able to use this approach during these sorts of rare special occasions and have no problems whatsoever and nothing but positive things to say about it, **there are some people who may struggle with the "returning to their normal intended diet the very next day" aspect of it**.

Which, of course, *is pretty damn important*.

In these cases, that feeling of "relaxed enjoyment" they temporarily got to experience will set off some kind of trigger that makes them only want it more. To the point where it takes them longer than it should to return to their normal intended diet (or maybe never return to it at all). And, even when they do, they may still remember how good that "relaxed enjoyment" felt, and that alone could lead to problems for them with compliance at some point down the road.

If this describes you, there's a very simple solution. **You should completely avoid using this approach, and stick with "controlled enjoyment" during these scenarios instead.**

5. EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE

And finally, we've arrived at the 5th point on our scale… *excessive indulgence*.

This one isn't so much an approach to less-than-ideal scenarios as it is an uncontrolled reaction to them. And it's a reaction that usually comes about for one reason and one reason only: **excessively restricting yourself in the days/weeks/months *prior* to one of these scenarios, and/or attempting to do so *during* one of these scenarios**.

And guess what happens next?

***Excessive indulgence*, typically in the form of a massive all-out binge. The kind where the person may feel physically sick afterwards. The kind that can sometimes last for days. The kind that can cause a person to stray so far from their intended diet that they don't come back to it at all.**

Like I've said many times already, if you excessively and unnecessarily restrict something long enough and severely enough, a breaking point will eventually be reached.

This is an example of that breaking point being reached.

And it's going to be accompanied by varying degrees of guilt and self-hate. Potentially also by purging to "undo the damage" and/or various other actions commonly associated with eating disorders.

No, this is not a good place to be at all.

What it is, however, is a perfect example of what #1 and #2 on this scale will usually *cause*, and what #3 and #4 will usually *prevent*.

But wait… what's that you're saying?

"What if it's not THAT bad? What if this scenario does play out like you say, but the binge isn't quite as massive as you say? What if it's maybe just 1000 calories of overeating on that one day only? How is this result any different than if the person overate the same 1000 calories using the 'relaxed enjoyment' approach from #4?"

First of all, it usually IS this bad.

Second, okay, let's compare #4 vs #5 on Christmas. Let's say in both cases, exactly 1000 calories ended up being overeaten.

It looks like the result is exactly the same, right?

Sure… *in terms of calories eaten that day*.

But what about everything else? Specifically, **what about the mental aftermath**?

With scenario #4, the person went into Christmas *intending* to relax and enjoy themselves while completely understanding that doing so won't have any meaningful impact on their results as long as they get back to normal the next day… which they will.

So in the end, that person will feel nothing but happy with how things went on Christmas, because they *succeeded* at everything they were trying to do (relaxing and enjoying on that day, and returning to their normal diet the next).

But that other person?

From scenario #5?

Rather than intending to relax and enjoy (essentially allowing themselves to overeat a bit), they intended to be unnecessarily, excessively and unrealistically strict on Christmas… *and they failed*.

And that feeling of failure will lead to guilt, self-hate, and all of the illogical thoughts we talked about earlier that cause a person to turn a non-problem into a real problem.

So, sure… both people may have overeaten the same 1000 calories in both cases, but the difference is HUGE when it comes to what truly matters most and what events take place afterward.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that you're prepared to take on pretty much any dietary circumstance that the real world throws at you, it's time to move away from diet topics for a bit and on to something we really haven't talked about at all yet.

Exercise.

First up, weight training…

CHAPTER 15

Weight Training For Superior Fat Loss

WEIGHT TRAINING FOR SUPERIOR FAT LOSS

It's time to talk about weight training. And I think the very best way for us to begin this conversation is by determining whether or not it's something you actually *need* to be doing in order to reach your goals.

So…

Is weight training a requirement for losing fat?

The answer is ***no***.

As you already know by now, the sole requirement for losing fat is a caloric deficit, and that can (and in my opinion, *should*) be accomplished through diet alone.

Which means, *for the purpose of losing fat*, weight training is completely optional.

HOWEVER, in addition to its calorie burning effects (and thus its ability to help you be in that deficit) and long list of health benefits, **weight training is an absolute requirement for *building muscle* while losing fat**, and **an absolute requirement for *maintaining muscle* while losing fat**.

For these reasons, **weight training is a *requirement* of *Superior Fat Loss***.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *The main exception to my above statement would be people who are currently physically unable to do any form of weight training. This could be due to a health or medical issue, a disability, or the fact that they are presently overweight to a degree that prevents them from being physically capable of an activity like weight training (i.e., you checked with your doctor and they did not clear you for it). In the latter case, losing a sufficient amount of fat and then checking back with your doctor to see if you get the "okay" then would be the right move. However, for everyone else who is currently physically capable, you should definitely begin weight training right from Day 1.*

Here's how we're going to do it…

THE THREE BENEFICIAL PURPOSES

There are three different ways that we can use weight training during a period of fat loss.

They are:

1. To **build muscle** while losing fat.
2. To **maintain muscle** while losing fat.
3. To **lose fat**, period.

Let's now take a look at the best way to accomplish all three…

WEIGHT TRAINING TO BUILD MUSCLE WHILE LOSING FAT

Here's a question. Why would a person reading this book want to build muscle? After all, this is a fat loss book. You're reading it because losing fat is your goal, not building muscle.

But wait… what's that you say?

You can have more than one goal?!?

Indeed you can.

And, in my experience, the combination of losing fat *and* building muscle is (by far) the most common goal I get asked about.

The reason why is pretty clear: **muscle**… **looks**… **good**.

Yeah, yeah, there are health benefits that come along with it. Sure, sure, there are performance benefits that come along with it as well. But, above all else, people want to build muscle because it makes them look (and subsequently *feel*) awesome!

How so? Think of it this way.

Have you seen people who lose weight and just end up looking… skinnier? Or thinner? Or like a smaller, weaker, still-soft-and-flabby version of their previously fatter selves – a lovely state most often referred to as *skinny-fat*?

On the other hand, have you seen people who lose weight and end up looking… lean? And muscular? And fit? And toned? And defined? And athletic? And strong? And just plain awesome?

Well, guess what the primary difference is between these two scenarios?

Muscle.

Whether it's only a few pounds or a whole lot of it, muscle is the ultimate body-composition difference maker. Which is why most people don't *only* want to lose fat. They want to build muscle *while* losing that fat.

As great as that sounds, though, there is one small problem: **not everyone is going to be able to do it**.

At least, not to any truly meaningful extent.

The reason why is pretty simple, and it goes back to something I mentioned earlier. And that is the fact that:

- **Building muscle** requires providing your body with MORE calories than it needs to maintain its current state (aka a surplus), thus supplying the extra energy it needs to synthesize new muscle tissue and support the overall training performance and recovery needed during this time.
- **Losing fat** requires providing your body with LESS calories than it needs to maintain its current state (aka a deficit), thus causing it to burn your own stored body fat for fuel instead.

As you can see, these two goals have caloric requirements that are in direct opposition of each other. And for this reason, building muscle and losing fat at the same time – or, more accurately, *building muscle while in a caloric deficit* – is not only hard, it's sometimes flat-out impossible.

That is… *for certain people*.

You see, when it comes to achieving both goals simultaneously, I like to break things up into two different categories of people:

1. Those who are likely to be able to do it… and do it well.
2. Those who are less likely to be able to do it, or simply won't be able to do it at all to any meaningful degree.

Let's find out which category you fall into.

THOSE WHO ARE LIKELY

As I just mentioned, additional calories beyond what your body needs to maintain its current state are *ALWAYS* required for muscle to be built.

In most cases, those calories will come **externally via a dietary surplus**. Meaning, a person will determine what their maintenance level is, and then eat some number of calories more than that to create a surplus and support muscle growth. (*Superior Muscle Growth* covers this in detail.)

In certain other cases, however, there's actually a second way for those required extra calories to be provided. And that is via an **internal source**. Specifically… ***your stored body fat***.

What essentially ends up happening then is a magical calorie partitioning scenario whereby calories stored in your body in the form of fat are being burned as the fuel source that supports muscle growth.

Pretty nice, huh?

The thing is, some people will be much more likely to possess and effectively use this "magical" ability than others.

The question is… **who are these people**? (And yes, I said that in my best Jerry Seinfeld voice.)

Well, there are primarily four types of people in this category:

1. **Beginners.**
   This refers to people who are beginners to consistent, intelligent weight training, as well as people who are beginners to building muscle in general. So, this would include **people who have never done any serious weight training before in their lives (and are therefore in an untrained state and primed for making rapid improvements)**, as well as **people who HAVE done some weight training (potentially even for years)**, **but built little to no muscle during that time (and are therefore in a similarly untrained state in terms of muscle growth)**. This second scenario often occurs because the person spent all of that time weight training for some other non-muscle-building purpose, or, more commonly, because they were weight training in a borderline useless manner that produced terrible muscle building results.

   So, if any of this describes you, congrats! You will be able to build muscle (and gain plenty of strength) while you're in a deficit losing fat. Exactly how long this scenario (often fondly referred to as "beginner gains" or "noob gains") will last and exactly how effectively the muscle building aspect of it will go depend on a few factors specific to you. Most notably… age (younger = better), genetics (better = better), and how fat you currently are. When it comes to being able to build muscle in a deficit, the fatter you are, the better/faster/longer it will happen (e.g., someone with 50-100 lbs to lose will likely build more muscle faster than someone with 10-20 lbs to lose). This is simply because having more fat readily available makes it easier for your body to make that magical calorie partitioning scenario take place.

2. **People regaining lost muscle.**
   This refers to people who did some form of consistent, intelligent weight training at some point in their lives, and did so well enough to build a meaningful amount of muscle. **However, at some point, they stopped weight training for a long enough period of time to lose some/most/all of the muscle they built.** In this case, the person is essentially back to being a

"beginner" all over again… thus putting them in the same untrained (or in this case, *de-trained*) state that the previously mentioned beginners were in… thus allowing them to build (or really… *re-build*) muscle while losing fat. In fact, these people will actually be able to re-build muscle at a faster rate than they initially built it the first time around. Ever hear of the term "**muscle memory**"? Well, it's very real, and this is what it's referring to.

Once again, exactly how long this period will last and how effectively the muscle building aspect of it will go depends on a few factors specific to you. Age, genetics and how fat you currently are… plus how much muscle you previously built and then lost. The more it was, the more you'll be able to regain.

3. **People with amazing genetics.**

   This refers to people who… okay… I think this one is pretty self-explanatory, right? No? Fine. It's the people we're all jealous of. **The ones who can physically do stuff we can't (e.g., run *really* fast, jump *really* high, etc.), and the stuff we can do they just do better, faster and easier (e.g., exceed normal rates and limits of muscle growth, etc.).** And chances are the lucky bastards who fit this description are much too busy already being leaner and more muscular then the rest of us (or finding it surprisingly easy and problem-free to get that way) to even be reading this in the first place. But yes, in what should come as a surprise to nobody (do I sound bitter?), this is another group of people who are capable of building muscle while losing fat.

4. **People using drugs/steroids.**

   This refers to **people who are using various drugs and/or steroids to basically improve and/or exceed what their genetics allow** in terms of their natural ability to build muscle, lose fat, or, in this case, do both at the same time. I've already written plenty before about the insane degree that drug/steroid use changes everything. Feel free to check it out if you're interested.

THOSE WHO ARE LESS LIKELY

Now that you know who is most likely to build muscle in a deficit (and do it well), it's time to talk about who is least likely. Brace yourself, because it's going to be a super complicated list…

1. **Pretty much everyone else.**

Taaadaaa!

Okay, let me elaborate a bit…

If you are at the intermediate or advanced level in terms of weight training experience, strength levels and the amount of muscle you've already built, then the unfortunate reality is that muscle growth in a deficit either doesn't happen at all, or happens in extremely tiny amounts at an extremely slow rate that borders on practically not happening at all.

Yes, amazing genetics can potentially change that. So can various drugs/steroids.

And sure, some sort of intelligent cyclical dieting approach (alternating short periods of being in a surplus with short periods of being in a deficit) or "recomp" (short for recomposition) approach (typically involving alternating days of being in a surplus with days of being in a deficit for the purpose of breaking even at maintenance at the end of the week) can potentially lead to some *very slow* and *very minor* improvements in fat loss and muscle growth over time.

And maybe there's even some other rare exception I'm leaving out altogether.

Either way, the bottom line is this.

For the vast majority of people fitting the description I just gave in the bold paragraph above, building muscle in a deficit is highly unlikely to happen at anything resembling a truly meaningful (or acceptable) rate, or to a truly meaningful (or acceptable) degree. In many cases, *it's just not going to happen at all*.

And in a lot of those cases, when the person still attempts to do both at the same time, they often end up canceling out the needs of each goal and therefore failing to do either.

So then, how do you build muscle and lose fat at the same time if you're in this category?

You don't.

Instead, you take turns alternating between phases of fat loss and muscle growth.

Specifically, you focus on **losing fat WHILE maintaining as much muscle as possible** (which is what *Superior Fat Loss* is entirely designed for). Then, once you have reached your fat loss goals and are sufficiently lean, you switch your focus over to **building muscle WHILE preventing excess body fat from being gained** (which is what *Superior Muscle Growth* is entirely designed for).

And then, depending on how much muscle you want to build and how lean you want to be, you simply continue alternating between each goal until your desired results have been achieved.

Which means, for people in this category, rather than trying to build muscle while in a deficit, your focus needs to shift over to ***maintaining muscle*** **while in a deficit**.

If you still end up building a tiny bit of muscle while doing that, awesome! We'll gladly take it. But that's not going to be the primary focus or intention of your training at this point. *Maintaining muscle will*. And that's something we'll be covering in detail in the next section.

But for now, let's get back to the lucky people who CAN build muscle in a deficit.

Here's how to make it happen…

HOW TO BUILD MUSCLE WHILE LOSING FAT

In terms of your **diet**, all you need to do is follow the guidelines already laid out in this book.

That's right. We haven't just been designing things to simply cause fat loss. We've been designing things to produce the best results possible. And this most definitely includes maximizing your ability to build muscle in a deficit.

So, things like…

- Keeping your deficit moderate in size rather than too large.
- Keeping your rate of weight loss similarly moderate rather than too fast.
- Setting protein intake to levels that optimize muscle growth.
- Setting fat intake to levels that optimize muscle building hormone production.
- Setting carb intake to levels that optimize training performance and recovery.
- Designing your pre- and post-workout nutrition for optimal training performance and recovery.

And more.

It has all been designed to help you build muscle to the best of your ability.

All that's left to do now is to combine this ideal diet with an equally ideal weight training program aimed at producing superior results in this scenario. Here now is that program…

THE BEGINNER WEIGHT TRAINING WORKOUT ROUTINE

There's a workout routine that I've been recommending to beginners (and those returning to weight training after a long time off) for years, and I've seen it work amazingly well time and time again.

I simply call it **The Beginner Weight Training Workout Routine**.

Why such a definitive name? Because it's almost always the first program that I recommend to beginners with ANY goal, and it's been so successful that I've just never found a reason to replace it or come up with anything else.

So, while there are quite a few different programs that I'd recommend to intermediate or advanced trainees, there's really only one that I recommend to beginners. This is that program.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

One thing you'll notice about most *intelligently designed* beginner routines is that they tend to have a lot in common. Why? Because there's a very specific list of weight training guidelines that have been proven to work best for people who are presently in an "untrained" or "de-trained" state in terms of:

- Producing the fastest improvement of motor learning, coordination and proper form.
- Producing the fastest improvement of work capacity, volume tolerance and recovery.
- Producing the fastest improvements in strength, muscle growth and endurance.

And, any intelligent beginner program will be designed to meet as many of these guidelines as possible. So, what are these general programming guidelines? They are as follows:

- Higher frequency (usually 3 times per week).
- Full body split.
- Low volume.
- Primarily comprised of basic compound exercises and very little (or nothing) else.

- Very little exercise variety.
- No advanced methods or techniques.
- A primary focus on consistent progression.

The routine you're about to see meets all of them.

Let's get down to the details…

THE SPLIT

The first thing you need to know about this program is what weight training split and weekly schedule it will use.

If you've ever read any article I've ever written about weight training frequency, splits/schedules, or just beginners in general, then you definitely know what split we're going to be using.

I'm of course talking about the **3-day full body split**, which is by far the most proven and often recommended workout schedule for beginners with *any* goal.

The specific type of full body split that this program uses is commonly referred to as an alternating "ABA BAB" format.

You probably have no idea what that means, but you will when you see it written out…

Days	Week #1
Monday	Workout A
Tuesday	off
Wednesday	Workout B
Thursday	off
Friday	Workout A
Saturday	off
Sunday	off

Days	Week #2
Monday	Workout B
Tuesday	off
Wednesday	Workout A
Thursday	off
Friday	Workout B
Saturday	off
Sunday	off

See, even though there are 3 workout days per week, there are just 2 actual workouts.

The first is the "**A**" workout and the second is the "**B**" workout. Then you just alternate between them so that it's ABA one week and BAB the next. And so on.

Makes sense now, right? Good.

I will also mention that the exact days of the week you choose really doesn't matter at all as long as the same every-other-day format is kept intact with 2 consecutive days off at the end.

So, that's the split. Now let's find out what those A and B workouts actually are…

THE WORKOUTS

Before you see the workouts, let me prepare you in advance by saying that they are probably going to seem a little strange looking to many people. You'll probably think it's WAY too little, or WAY too simple and basic.

Well, if you think any of those things, then it's pretty obvious that any beginner workouts you've seen before this were likely pretty damn horrible.

How do I know? Because some variation of the workouts you are about to see are what's proven to be most ideal (and most often recommended) for beginners with virtually any goal.

Even if you might not think it is, and even if what you've seen before is very different. *Trust me.* This is what works best for beginners. Damn near all real-world experience and expert recommendations support some form of what you're about to see.

Having said that, here are the workouts…

THE BEGINNER WEIGHT TRAINING WORKOUT ROUTINE: VERSION 1

Workout A

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Squats	3	8-10	2 minutes
2	Bench Press	3	8-10	2 minutes
3	Rows	3	8-10	2 minutes

Workout B

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Deadlifts	3	6-8	2 minutes
2	Pull-Ups (or Lat Pull-Downs)	3	8-10	2 minutes
3	Shoulder Press	3	8-10	2 minutes

As you can see, these are the most basic and important compound exercises put together in a way that ensures perfect balance, sufficient frequency and recovery, and low volume.

This is all *perfectly ideal* for beginners, and this is what will allow for the fastest progression and the best overall results.

Now for some details and clarifications…

DETAILS AND CLARIFICATIONS: WORKOUT A

- The "A" workout is made up of a quad dominant leg exercise (squats), a horizontal push (bench press), and a horizontal pull (rows).
- **Squats** are definitely recommended (barbell back squats, that is), but leg presses could be used in their place if necessary.
- For the **bench press**, a flat barbell bench press is recommended, but a flat dumbbell bench press can work too. Use a spotter whenever possible/necessary.
- For the **row**, pick any horizontal back rowing exercise you want. Bent over barbell or dumbbell rows, seated cable rows, chest supported machine rows. They're all fine. Pick your favorite.

DETAILS AND CLARIFICATIONS: WORKOUT B

- The "B" workout contains a hip/ham dominant leg exercise (deadlifts), a vertical pull (pull-ups/pull-downs), and a vertical push (shoulder press).
- For the **deadlift**, a conventional deadlift would probably be recommended for beginners most often, but a Romanian deadlift (or stiff-legged deadlift) could be used instead if necessary or preferred.
- **Pull-ups** are recommended for the vertical pull, but if you can't do them yet, lat pull-downs or some form of assisted pull-up would be a suitable replacement. If you work out at home and don't have access to a pull-up bar or a lat pull-down machine, then some type of band pull-down (like this, albeit a little slower) is one possible option to consider. Otherwise, you can just do another rowing movement (e.g., bent over dumbbell rows). However, to place more emphasis on your lats (like pull-ups and lat pull-downs would), keep your elbows tucked in close to your sides and pull the weight more toward your hips/lower stomach rather than your upper stomach/chest.
- For the **shoulder press**, any type of seated overhead shoulder press is fine (seated barbell press, seated dumbbell press, whatever).

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FOCUS ON PROPER FORM FIRST

It is typically recommended that all beginners spend their first few weeks on a weight training routine focusing primarily on learning proper form. I recommend you do the same with this program.

Don't worry about anything else during those first couple of weeks. Just pick a weight for each exercise that is definitely a little too light and easy for you, and focus on learning and using proper form with it.

Getting exercise technique right at this beginner stage is extremely important, so make sure you do.

Once those few weeks are up and you feel like your form is what it needs to be on every exercise, then it's time to focus on **consistent progression** while keeping that proper form intact.

Let me explain…

PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD

At the very beginning of this book, I explained the following:

> *"…your body's one and only goal is to keep you alive and functioning. To support this goal, your body is designed in such a way that makes it highly capable of adapting to the situations you put it in and the environments in which these situations occur.*
>
> *Which means that if your body senses that something is happening to it that can potentially interfere with your survival or function, its natural adaptive response will always be to do whatever it is capable of doing to try to solve it, improve it or prevent it."*

When making this point, I used the act of sweating as an example. Your body senses that your core temperature is getting too high, so it sweats as a method of cooling you down.

Similarly, when your body senses that a sufficient amount of external energy (aka calories) isn't available, it adapts by burning your stored body fat for fuel instead.

As it turns out, **muscle growth is an adaptive response that occurs for the same type of survival-based reason**.

Which is to say that your body will only build more muscle when it senses that "more muscle" is the adaptation that MUST occur in order for it to continue to survive and function.

So how do you make this happen? **By putting your body in an environment that consistently increases the demands it has to meet.**

And that right there brings us to a little something called the "progressive overload principle."

THE PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD PRINCIPLE

The progressive overload principle basically states:

In order for a muscle to grow, it must be forced to adapt to a stimulus that is above and beyond what it has previously experienced.

You're probably going to want to read that again. It's pretty important.

And what it means is, if you lift the same weights, for the same number of reps, the same way for the next 20 years… *nothing will ever happen*. Your body will never change or improve in any way. No new muscle will be built.

You will only maintain your current state.

However, if you increase the demands you are placing on your body by increasing the weight being lifted, lifting the same weight for more reps, or just doing something that increases the demands that your body needs to meet, then your body will have no other choice but to make the changes and improvements necessary for it to adapt to this environment and remain capable of performing these tasks.

Now guess what these "changes" and "improvements" and "adaptations" will come in the form of? You guessed it… **more muscle**.

You're basically showing your body that in order for it to survive… in order for it to do what you are forcing it to do… it's going to NEED to build more muscle.

Let me show you exactly what I mean in the specific context of weight training.

AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD

Let's pretend that right now you can lift 50 lbs on some exercise for 3 sets of 8 reps.

Now, if you continue to lift that same 50 lbs for those same 3 sets of 8 reps for the next 20 years… you will not gain any new muscle or strength at all.

Why? Because there was no progressive overload.

Your body has already adapted to this tension (50 lbs for 3 sets of 8 reps) and has already provided you with exactly as much muscle and strength as you need to be able to perform this task on a regular basis.

Because you aren't increasing the demands being placed on your body, you aren't giving your body a reason to improve any further.

And, because of that… *it won't*.

You can do everything else perfectly, but if you fail to provide some form of progressive overload over time, your body will never see any reason to change.

However, if you were to lift 50 lbs for 3 sets of 9 reps (instead of 3 sets of 8 reps) on that same exercise, then a reason would finally exist.

Why? Simple. You increased the tension. You increased the demands. You increased the training stimulus. You increased the work your body had to do. Instead of doing the same 3 sets of 8 reps with 50 lbs, you worked to do 1 additional rep on each of those sets.

And while that may only seem like a tiny improvement, it's *exactly* what you need to do to trigger your body's natural adaptive muscle building response.

Similarly, if you were to now try to lift 55 lbs for 3 sets of 8 reps (an increase of 5 lbs)… the exact same type of reason would exist.

You're basically telling your body: "Hey, look at this. The work you have to do has increased, so you better build some more muscle to compensate and adapt to these new conditions."

This is progressive overload, and this, above all else, is what signals muscle growth.

Whether you get just 1 more rep on just 1 set, or add 5 lbs to all of your sets… it doesn't matter. Your goal is to somehow beat what you did the previous time.

And as long as you do this as often as you realistically can and cause some form of gradual progression to take place over time, you'll be giving your body a reason to continue to adapt and improve.

As long as that reason is present, the signal to build more muscle will be present as well.

If that reason stops (or if it never existed in the first place), then your body stops having a reason to improve. No matter how perfectly you're doing everything else, no new positive changes will be made without progressive overload happening. The signal just doesn't exist without it.

DOES THAT MEAN I NEED TO PROGRESS EVERY SINGLE WORKOUT?

Nope. In fact, doing so would be impossible, at least for a very significant period of time. If we could, everyone would be lifting a thousand pounds for a hundred reps on every exercise. That's just not realistic.

As a beginner, however, you should certainly expect to make this kind of consistent progression from one workout to the next (*and strive to do so*) during your first few months. This is partly because you're starting a little lighter to master proper form, but mostly because beginners are more capable of progressing at a faster rate than anyone else (behold the magic of "beginner gains").

Definitely take advantage of it for as long as you can.

As you gradually get stronger and more experienced, that progression will gradually become less consistent. But you should definitely maintain the mindset of trying to make progression take place as often as possible, and try to increase the demands being placed on your body as often as you realistically can (within the realm of safety and proper form, of course).

So that might be every workout (which is how it will go for the first few months), or eventually every other workout, or eventually even just once per month or less.

Regardless of how often progression occurs, the big take home message here is that if you want to build any amount of muscle, your #1 job is to just make sure it happens. *It's a requirement*.

Now here's how to do it.

THE PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD PROTOCOL

There are a handful of different ways for progression to effectively take place.

However, for *most* of the people, *most* of the time, there is one particular method that I (and many others) have found to be ideal.

As you just saw a few pages ago, this beginner program contains specific exercises that you are supposed to perform during each workout. And for each exercise, there are a certain number of sets that you are supposed to do and a certain number of reps you're supposed to do each set.

And obviously, you will also have a certain amount of weight that you will be lifting during each exercise (this, of course, will vary based on individual strength levels for each exercise).

Now, the way this progression protocol will work is like this:

1. Meet the prescribed set and rep goal for the exercise.
2. Increase the weight being lifted for that exercise by the smallest increment possible the next time you perform this exercise.
3. Meet the set/rep goal again with this new, slightly heavier weight.
4. Increase the weight being lifted again by the smallest increment possible.
5. Repeat this process over and over again as often as you are capable of making it happen.

Confused? Here's an example…

AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROGRESSIVE OVERLOAD PROTOCOL

Let's say for one of the exercises in this program (let's call it Exercise XYZ), you are currently lifting **50 lbs** (as usual, that's just a completely random example number).

Let's also say the prescribed set and rep range for this exercise is **3 sets of 8-10 reps** (which is what it is for most of the exercises in this beginner program).

This means you will do 3 sets of Exercise XYZ, lifting 50 lbs in all 3 of those sets, and performing between 8-10 reps per set. So, you could make your goal 3 sets of 8 reps if you wanted to. Or 3 sets of 9. Or 3 sets of 10. Or even 1 set of 10, 1 set of 9 and 1 set of 8. Any of these options would be acceptable. Just be consistent with it (i.e., don't make the goal 3x10 this week and then 3x8 the next… keep the goal the same each time).

For the purpose of this example, we'll go with an even **3 sets of 8 reps**.

Now let's say today you did Exercise XYZ and it went like this:

- **Set #1:** 50 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #2:** 50 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #3:** 50 lbs – 8 reps

As you can see, you lifted 50 lbs for 3 sets of 8 reps in this example. Since your intended set/rep goal is 3 sets of 8 reps – *and you successfully did that* – this workout was a success!

That means it's now time to increase the weight by the smallest increment possible. So, the next time you perform Exercise XYZ, you should do something like this:

- **Set #1:** 55 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #2:** 55 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #3:** 55 lbs – 8 reps

See what happened? Progressive overload took place. You increased the weight you were lifting by 5 lbs (which is usually the smallest possible increment) and performed that same intended 3 sets of 8 reps with this new slightly heavier weight.

That means this workout was once again a complete success. The next time you perform Exercise XYZ, you'd go up to 60 lbs and again attempt 3 sets of 8 reps. You would then continue increasing like this as often as possible over and over again.

The only thing is, you won't always be able to increase this much and/or this consistently from workout to workout (early on, yes… but less so as you get stronger and more experienced).

In fact, instead of that second successful workout shown above (the 55 lbs for 3 sets of 8 reps), some people may eventually end up doing something like this:

- **Set #1:** 55 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #2:** 55 lbs – 7 reps
- **Set #3:** 55 lbs – 6 reps

This is completely normal and should still be considered a successful workout (it is still definitely progressive overload). In this case, your goal the next time you perform Exercise XYZ is something like this:

- **Set #1:** 55 lbs – 8 reps

- **Set #2:** 55 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #3:** 55 lbs – 7 reps

And then the time after that…

- **Set #1:** 55 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #2:** 55 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #3:** 55 lbs – 8 reps

And the time after that…

- **Set #1:** 60 lbs – 8 reps
- **Set #2:** 60 lbs – 7 reps
- **Set #3:** 60 lbs – 6 reps

And you would repeat this pattern of increasing reps/weight over and over again so that your body continues to have a reason to adapt and improve over and over again.

WILL PROGRESSION ALWAYS GO THIS SMOOTHLY?

Once again, for your first few months of training, *it will*. That's just part of what makes a beginner capable of building muscle in a deficit in the first place.

But, at some point later on, there will definitely be times when you end up repeating the same number of sets/reps/weight that you did the previous workout. Sometimes this might even continue for quite a while with certain exercises as you get more and more advanced.

There will also be times where, in the above example for instance, you might only get reps of 7, 7, 7, or 7, 6, 6, or 7, 6, 5 in the three sets after going up in weight. Maybe even less. Don't worry, it's all perfectly normal.

Your job is to just work your ass off to progress in some way as often as you can and beat what you were able to do the previous time. Add 1 rep to every set, add 1 rep to just one set, add 2 reps to one set and 1 rep to another, add 5 lbs to every set… whatever.

Just work hard to gradually reach your prescribed set/rep goal for each exercise. And then, once you do reach it, increase the weight you are lifting for that exercise by the smallest possible increment and repeat this protocol all over again.

This is all part of the process of progressive overload, and it is the #1 training requirement for building muscle.

DON'T SCREW WITH IT!

And finally, when looking at this beginner program, the thing you need to remember is that the goal of a beginner is NOT to try to blast every muscle from every angle with a ton of exercises and advanced methods and isolation exercises and a high amount of volume and other things a beginner has no business doing (hell, that sort of nonsense doesn't even work well for advanced people).

Like I said before, the primary goal of a beginner (besides learning proper form) is to take advantage of their ability to progress and improve faster at all things weight training related (especially strength and muscle gains) than any intermediate or advanced trainee ever could.

And the key to doing this is using a workout routine that follows the guidelines that will best allow that to happen. That typically means higher frequency, lower volume, small and basic exercise selection, nothing fancy.

Hey, what a coincidence… The Beginner Weight Training Workout Routine fits that description perfectly.

So please, beginners, I beg of you. Don't try to do something more advanced, and don't try to add additional advanced stuff to the program laid out above. If you want the best results possible, do it exactly as is and **focus on proper form and consistent progression**.

THE BEGINNER WEIGHT TRAINING WORKOUT ROUTINE: VERSION 2

The weight training program I laid out a few pages ago is a pretty damn perfect beginner routine.

But, you see, I know that no matter how many times I explain that this routine is totally ideal for beginners as is, many people are just going to ignore me and add more to it as they please. You were already thinking about doing it, weren't you? Don't lie. Admit it.

Well, if you are one of those people (shame on you, silly beginner!), this second version of the program is my attempt at helping you not listen to me in a way that doesn't completely screw things up.

So, using the same 3-day full body split from before (in the same "ABA BAB" format), here is another extremely similar version of the original workouts with a few *very minor* additions made to them…

Workout A

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Squats	3	8-10	2 minutes
2	Bench Press	3	8-10	2 minutes
3	Rows	3	8-10	2 minutes
4	Triceps Pushdowns	1	10-15	-
5	Calf Raises	2	8-12	1 minute

Workout B

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Deadlifts	3	6-8	2 minutes
2	Pull-Ups (or Lat Pull-Downs)	3	8-10	2 minutes
3	Shoulder Press	3	8-10	2 minutes
4	Dumbbell Curls	1	10-15	-
5	Abs	2	8-15	1 minute

Everything else remains just like before (see the notes from earlier if you need additional details/clarifications), except now we've added some direct biceps and triceps work along with a little bit of calves and abs as well. (For abs, do 2 sets of whatever ab exercise you want.)

So, the program is still ideal for beginners AND you got some extra stuff added to it. Are you happy now?

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I hope so, because the more you try to add on top of Version 1, the more it starts to become an intermediate program. And the more that happens, the less and less effective it's going to be for a beginner like you.

THE BEGINNER WEIGHT TRAINING WORKOUT ROUTINE: VERSION 3

Even though Version 1 (or 2) of the workouts I just described is what I would recommend *most* often to *most* beginners, that doesn't mean it's absolutely perfect for everyone.

See, I don't know who is reading this book. I don't know your background or your current condition. I don't know your age or weight. I don't know your specific needs or situation.

What I'm getting at here is that the problem with designing workout routines for "all beginners" is that some older men and women, some very overweight men and women, and/or some very out of shape men and women sometimes have significantly different training needs than other people.

This is especially true in the case of beginners. With intermediate or advanced trainees, everyone is typically within some similar range and level of fitness and will therefore be capable of doing similar workouts.

But, with beginners, you get ALL kinds of people in ALL kinds of different situations and conditions who are NOT all capable of the same things.

For example, should an obese 50-year-old who sometimes has trouble getting up a flight of stairs do the exact same beginner workout as a fit and athletic 20-year-old?

Even if their goals are exactly the same (which, as I mentioned before, is essentially true with all beginners), and even if they could both benefit most from the exact same workout, they probably aren't anywhere near capable of the same things at this beginning point.

And this is the problem with creating programs for beginners. The guidelines and principles and fundamentals of the program will always be perfect, but sometimes it's the minor details (which usually don't matter) that end up causing problems based on the specific person using the program.

This, of course, is something I have no control over.

So, here's what I'm going to do about it.

THE BEST POSSIBLE SOLUTION

I'm going to lay out the textbook definition of a generic "full body workout" **template**. It will contain one exercise for each major movement pattern and/or muscle group. For each exercise, I will list a suitable (usually machine based) exercise that can be done in its place below it.

I will then give you a range of sets and reps that can be done depending on how much volume you can handle, and a suggested rest interval will be listed as well.

And then from there… it's up to you to use everything you know about yourself and YOUR situation and YOUR needs to try to design a beginner program that's tailored to YOU.

Here is the basic template of a generic full body workout…

The Generic Full Body Workout Template

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Squats (or leg press)	1-3	8-10	1-2 minutes
2	Romanian Deadlifts (or leg curls)	1-3	8-10	1-2 minutes
3	Bench Press (or chest press machine)	1-3	8-10	1-2 minutes
4	Row (or row machine)	1-3	8-10	1-2 minutes
5	Shoulder Press (or shoulder press machine)	1-3	8-10	1-2 minutes
6	Pull-Ups (or lat pull-down machine)	1-3	8-10	1-2 minutes
7	Biceps Curl (bar, dumbbell or machine)	0-1	10-15	-
8	Triceps Extension (or triceps pushdowns)	0-1	10-15	-
9	Calf Raises (seated or standing)	0-2	8-12	1-2 minutes

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Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
10	Abs (any ab exercise you want)	0-2	8-15	1-2 minutes

MY GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

- I'd recommend using either the lower range of sets, OR the higher range of sets but not doing all of the exercises listed in each workout.
- If you want to do the same full body workout each time, that's fine. If not, splitting the exercises up into an A and B workout and then doing them in the ABA BAB format is fine too.
- You should aim to do most of the first 6 exercises 2 or 3 times per week. The others can be done 0-3 times per week.

THE REST IS UP TO YOU

Some people would say that putting program design in the hands of a beginner is usually a very bad idea.

I agree with this.

But, at the same time, I think it's an even worse idea to put a beginner program out there and say it's perfect for ALL beginners to use.

So, I've included this generic beginner template version because I just didn't feel comfortable putting this book out there for anyone and everyone to use without giving you some kind of option to personalize it to your needs and preferences.

Yes, for most of the people reading this, I definitely recommend Version 1 (or Version 2) of The Beginner Weight Training Workout Routine I laid out earlier.

But, for that smaller group of people who need a program that is more geared toward their specific needs at this beginning stage, do your best to use the template and suggestions I just provided to put something together that is right for you.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. I'M NOT SURE HOW TO DO SOME OF THE EXERCISES IN THESE WORKOUTS. HOW DO I LEARN PROPER FORM?

The best way to learn proper form is to **get taught in person by someone who *legitimately* knows what they're doing**. Have them stand right there with you and teach it. And then have them watch you and continue to correct you until you get it right.

Now while this is by far the best way to learn how to properly do each exercise, it's also probably the hardest to actually make happen.

Why? **Because few people actually know what the hell they're doing… including many personal trainers.**

That means there is a very high probability that the person teaching you proper form may not actually have any idea what proper form is. Fun!

And no, that wasn't a typo. A significant portion of licensed/certified personal trainers in most gyms fit into this category as well. Many are just as clueless as the average clueless person in your gym.

Don't misunderstand me here. There are plenty of fantastic trainers out there who know their stuff. They do exist. I've seen them. I know a bunch of them. They are real. It's just that for every 1 trainer like this, there are probably 100 that suck.

So, what should you do? To be honest, this is one of the hardest questions to answer. The best advice I can offer is that if you are lucky enough to know or find someone who is truly knowledgeable and capable enough to teach you proper form… then by all means… let them!

If not, or if you're just not sure if you found someone who actually fits that description, then you really only have one other option: **teach yourself**.

Two common starting points are:

- http://www.exrx.net/Lists/Directory.html
- http://www.bodybuilding.com/exercises/

These websites contain exercise demonstrations for hundreds of the most popular/common exercises and should serve as a decent starting point for learning form.

Are they 100% perfect? Nope. The demonstrations tend to range from great, to okay, to laughable. But unfortunately, there is just no better option available.

You can also always just randomly search YouTube and hope for the best. But if you do, please remember that just because someone is teaching proper form and looks good and appears to know what they're doing/saying, *it doesn't actually mean they do*.

This is really a fine tip to keep in mind as you venture out into any area of the diet and fitness industry.

2. HOW MUCH WEIGHT SHOULD I LIFT FOR EACH EXERCISE?

Uh, whatever amount is appropriate for you to lift for each exercise. Obvious, I know.

But as I briefly mentioned earlier, this will vary from person to person and exercise to exercise based on individual strength levels (which are dependent on a variety of factors specific to each person). So, there's no real universal answer I could possibly give beyond that very obvious one.

This is why it's important to make sure the weight you start off using leans a lot more toward being a little too light/easy for you rather than a little too heavy/hard.

From there, just gradually progress in small increments. (Additional details here.)

3. WHAT ABOUT WARM-UP SETS?

Read this one.

4. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I REACH A WORKOUT PLATEAU, MY STRENGTH GAINS STALL AND I AM UNABLE TO PROGRESS?

Read this one.

5. WHEN SHOULD I SWITCH FROM THIS BEGINNER ROUTINE TO AN INTERMEDIATE ROUTINE?

Read this one.

6. WHAT ABOUT TRAINING TO FAILURE? SHOULD I GO TO FAILURE DURING ALL (OR ANY) OF MY SETS IN ANY OF THESE WORKOUTS?

The short answer is no, you should not purposely be going to failure (aka the point where you "fail" in the middle of a rep and are unable to complete it) during your sets and you should

definitely NOT make training to failure your goal. You should, however, be busting your ass to come within a rep or so of reaching that point most of the time.

The better/longer version of this answer can be found here.

7. IS THIS WORKOUT FOR MEN OR WOMEN?

Ha, that's cute. See… there is no such thing as a workout routine that's for a man or a workout routine that's for a woman. That's mostly all a marketing gimmick. There are just workouts that work and workouts that don't work (or in this case, workouts that work *best*).

Anything else you've ever heard, read or seen before or will ever hear, read or see in the future that makes it seem otherwise is bullshit.

And yes, I know… there is PLENTY of bullshit out there that makes it seem otherwise. But again, it's all bullshit just the same. Don't let it fool you.

All of the workouts I design are ideal for *people* who want to get the best results possible. So, as long as you're human, my workouts are for you.

8. NO, SERIOUSLY. I'M A WOMAN AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN POSSIBLY USE A WORKOUT ROUTINE THAT'S ALSO MADE FOR A MAN! THAT'S JUST CRAZY TALK!

I see that this point isn't quite getting through yet. But it's cool, I totally understand.

Like many of the women I've come across in the last 15+ years, you've probably been brainwashed into believing all kinds of crazy nonsense and stupid myths about weight training… all of which will only prevent you from training correctly and getting the body you truly want.

To fix it, we'll just need to do some reverse brainwashing. As it turns out, I've already written an article that will hopefully do just that. Check it out here.

9. BUT I JUST WANT TO GET TONED. WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A WORKOUT FOR TONING? OR SCULPTING? OR SHAPING?

Um, because every one of those words is associated with nothing but myths and nonsense (more about that later).

When it comes to weight training for the purpose of improving the way your body looks, there's literally only one thing you can do… ***build muscle***. Weight training doesn't shape muscles or

sculpt muscles or tone muscles or lengthen muscles. Nor does it burn the fat that is covering the muscle being trained (more about that later, too).

All weight training does in terms of "looks" related improvements is build muscle. That's it. There is literally nothing else you can be doing. So if you're not training to build (or maintain) muscle, you're not really training to do anything other than burn some calories.

So why is this workout geared toward *building muscle* and not that other stuff (toning, defining, shaping, sculpting, etc.)? Because this workout actually works, and workouts geared toward this other nonsense never do. Additional details here.

10. BUT I DON'T WANT TO GET TOO BIG AND BULKY!

Read this one.

11. I FEEL LIKE I NEED TO ADD MORE. I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT'S ENOUGH. I DON'T FEEL THAT SORE AFTER EACH WORKOUT. I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD BE DOING MORE SETS OR EXERCISES OR ADVANCED METHODS. SHOULD I?

NO! NO! NO! NO! NO! For the love of all humanity… NO!

Instead, read this one and this one.

12. IF I GAIN MUSCLE, WILL IT PREVENT ME FROM LOSING WEIGHT (EVEN THOUGH I'M STILL LOSING FAT) BECAUSE THE GAIN IN MUSCLE BALANCES OUT THE LOSS IN FAT?

Good question! I'm so glad I pretended you asked it.

First, muscle weighs something. So, when you build X lbs of muscle, you will gain X lbs of body weight. Why am I pointing out something so obvious? Because this can potentially have a *small* degree of impact on your rate of weight loss.

Now, will it be enough to STOP weight loss from happening on the scale for a significant period of time (i.e., 2-4 weeks or longer)? **That is HIGHLY unlikely.**

This is because the rate that fat loss can (and *should*) be happening is significantly faster than the rate that muscle growth can happen (even under the most ideal muscle building circumstances… which a deficit is not).

So no, you're not going to end up building muscle at a fast-enough rate to completely match/balance out your intended rate of fat loss (unless your intended rate of fat loss was extra slow for some strange and unnecessary reason). Additional details here.

Having said that, it can still potentially slow down your rate of WEIGHT loss *a little bit* even though your rate of FAT loss is still happening at the ideal rate you're intending for it to happen.

This is nothing to worry about, of course. It's actually a good thing. In fact, it's a *great* thing. It means you're doing an excellent job of building muscle while losing fat, and that's pretty much the ultimate best-case-scenario here.

13. WHAT IS THE BEST WORKOUT TIP YOU CAN GIVE ME?

That's easy… **keep a workout log**.

Think about it. Progressive overload is the primary stimulus for building muscle. Now, how are you supposed to progress in the next workout if you don't know *exactly* what you did in the previous workout?

That's why keeping some sort of log of the exercises you did, how much weight you lifted each set, how many reps you did each set, and how long you rested between sets is key. Then when it's time to repeat that workout, all you'll need to do is go into your log and see exactly what you were able to do last time so you'll know exactly what needs to be done this time to beat it.

This information is the difference between going into the gym to just "work out" and going into the gym to train for the specific purpose of reaching your goal. For this reason, keeping a workout log is a borderline requirement for building muscle.

Feel free to keep a simple no-frills log in a plain text document, or something fancier using some type of spreadsheet software (e.g., Excel), or use some kind of app on your phone, or just go old school and use a notebook and pen. It really doesn't matter how you do it as long as you do it.

WEIGHT TRAINING TO MAINTAIN MUSCLE WHILE LOSING FAT

Now for those of us who are much less likely to build muscle while in a deficit. As I explained earlier, the people who fall into this category are as follows:

> ***"If you are at the intermediate or advanced level in terms of weight training experience, strength levels and the amount of muscle you've already built, then the unfortunate reality is that muscle growth in a deficit either doesn't happen at all, or happens in extremely tiny amounts at an extremely slow rate that borders on practically not happening at all."***

Instead – for everyone fitting the above description – when your #1 goal is to lose fat, your #2 goal becomes *maintaining* as much muscle as possible while losing that fat.

In fact, thinking of it more as goal #1a and #1b is even more appropriate.

Why? Because…

LOSING MUSCLE IN A DEFICIT IS EXTREMELY COMMON

As I explained earlier, one of the main reasons why we're avoiding the term "weight loss" is because "weight" can be a lot of different things. As you've seen throughout this book, water and glycogen are frequently the cause of short-term changes to our body weight. Poop is another.

But in terms of longer-lasting changes to our body weight, that's usually going to be a result of gains and losses of fat or muscle.

This makes "fat loss" a much better term to describe our true goal here, because fat is the one and only thing we want to lose. Not water, not glycogen, not poop. And certainly, *not muscle*.

The only problem with this is that losing fat requires a caloric deficit, and a caloric deficit forces your body to find some alternative source of energy to burn for fuel.

Now, if it were up to you, that alternative energy source would ONLY be stored body fat.

Unfortunately, your body doesn't give a damn about what you want. It's all about what *it* wants. And what *it* wants is for you to survive as efficiently as possible.

So, when seeking out an alternative fuel source to burn, your body will gladly use everything that's available to it.

That means **stored body fat**, **muscle tissue** or **a combination of both**.

To make matters even worse, fat is more useful than muscle from a survival standpoint (it's the more efficient energy storage option, it provides padding and insulation, etc.) and muscle requires more energy to maintain than fat does (at a time when your body is doing everything possible to *conserve* energy).

For all of these reasons, what most commonly ends up happening when a person goes into a calorie-deficient state is that their body burns **a combination of both fat *and* muscle**.

That's the bad news.

HOW TO MAINTAIN MUSCLE WHILE LOSING FAT

The good news, however, is that exactly how much fat or muscle we end up losing is dependent on our **calorie partitioning**, *and that's something we actually have a good amount of control over*.

Granted, we can't change certain key factors that influence calorie partitioning (namely, genetics, age and gender), but we ARE in full control of the many diet and training factors that influence it as well. And the better we are at adjusting those factors to our advantage, the more muscle we're going to maintain (and the more fat we're going to lose).

Now, in terms of **dietary factors**, I have some more good news: *they're already taken care of*.

Just like I mentioned before, we haven't only been designing things to simply cause fat loss. We've been designing things to produce the best results possible. And this most definitely includes maximizing your ability to maintain muscle in a deficit.

So, things like…

- Setting protein intake to levels that are optimal for muscle maintenance.
- Keeping your deficit moderate in size rather than too large.
- Keeping your rate of weight loss similarly moderate rather than too fast.

- Incorporating methods like refeeds, calorie cycling and diet breaks to lower the various "switches" that worsen calorie partitioning.
- Setting fat intake to levels that optimize the production of hormones that influence partitioning.
- Setting carb intake to levels that optimize training performance and recovery.
- Designing your pre- and post-workout nutrition for optimal training performance and recovery.

And more.

It has all been designed to help you maintain muscle to the best of your ability.

So much so that those factors alone (especially protein intake) have been shown to make a huge positive difference in terms of how much muscle a person ends up losing or preserving during periods of fat loss.

But… having said that… *we can still do even better*.

How so? By using weight training to provide a "**muscle maintenance signal**."

THE MUSCLE MAINTENANCE SIGNAL

Remember everything I said about progressive overload in the previous section of this book?

How increasing the demands being placed on your body by gradually getting stronger over time (e.g., lifting progressively heavier weight, doing progressively more reps with the same weight, etc.) is the primary training stimulus that signals your body to *build* muscle?

Well, guess what?

The primary training stimulus for *maintaining muscle* is *maintaining* your current levels of strength.

In doing so, you're showing your body that the muscle it previously built in response to the increasing demands that were being placed on it (aka progressive overload) is STILL needed for your survival and function.

Why? Because those same demands are STILL present.

You're basically telling your body: "Hey, look at this. The environment hasn't changed. The same heavy stuff still needs to be lifted on a regular basis. You better keep the same amount of muscle around to remain capable of meeting these demands."

So, whereas getting stronger = more muscle, maintaining strength = maintaining muscle.

Here's a practical example.

If you currently bench press 200 lbs for 6 reps, your goal throughout the duration of time that you spend in a deficit is to end up bench pressing that same 200 lbs for 6 reps (or as close to it as possible) by the time you're done losing fat.

The same goes for every other exercise in your program.

Basically, whatever amount of weight you're currently able to lift and whatever number of reps you're currently able to lift it for during each set of each exercise in each workout, **your #1 training goal during fat loss is to maintain those numbers as best as realistically possible**.

SO... JUST MAINTENANCE? NO PROGRESSION AT ALL?

Now, does that mean that you won't get *any* stronger during this time? Or that you *can't* get any stronger during this time?

Of course not.

It is certainly possible to gain some degree of strength while in a deficit, even for non-beginners. This is especially true when you're using an intelligently designed diet and workout program (which, of course, *we are*).

So, sure, it's possible that some strength can still be gained here and there for people in this category. However, compared to being at maintenance or in a surplus, it's going to be *significantly* harder to make it happen (especially often, consistently, or to anything resembling a high degree).

And, in a lot of cases, the reality is that it's not really going to happen at all.

But... *that's fine*.

It's important to remember that gaining strength in a deficit is not the goal here. It's nice, and we'll gladly take it when we can get it (so yes, definitely progress in reps/weight if you ever find yourself

able to), but it's more like the icing on the cake of our actual goal… **which is to simply maintain strength as best as possible**.

WEIGHT TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR MAINTAINING MUSCLE

The only question we need to answer now is, what kind of weight training program is ideal for maintaining strength (and therefore muscle) in a deficit?

The answer is quite simple…

Any intelligent workout program that can be used to effectively *build* muscle can also be used to effectively *maintain* muscle… potentially with some small adjustments made to compensate for the reduction in performance and recovery that comes with being in a deficit.

Yup, this includes virtually all of the different workouts included in *Superior Muscle Growth*, as well as any other similarly well-designed workout put out by anyone else that has also proven to work extremely well for building muscle.

For obvious (*and completely unbiased*) reasons, I'd recommend the ones in SMG over anything else.

But yes, any workout fitting this description can be used for the purpose of maintaining muscle… *with some small potential adjustments*.

Now, what kind of "small potential adjustments" am I talking about, exactly?

Well, as I just alluded to a minute ago and touched on earlier as well, one of the many things that suck about losing fat is that a caloric deficit is literally an energy deficit.

And when you're in this energy-deficient state, nonessential tasks that… you know… *require energy*… are going to be hindered to some extent.

Like it or not, this will include weight training.

Performance is reduced. Recovery is reduced. Volume tolerance is reduced. Work capacity is reduced. Fatigue is increased. Muscle glycogen is lowered. And on and on and on. All of which come together to make maintaining strength in the gym a whole lot harder than we'd like it to be.

Fortunately, though, there are some adjustments that can be made to help compensate for this. Specifically, one or both of the following…

- **Reduce frequency.**
  In this context, training frequency refers to the total number of workouts there are per week and/or how often each body part is trained per week. Reducing this from what's optimal for building muscle in a surplus to what's *sufficient* for maintaining muscle in a deficit is often the right idea. Exactly how much of a reduction is needed is hard to say, as it will vary by person based on everything from age, genetics and strength levels, to stress levels, sleep quality and how much frequency your chosen workout program initially called for.

  Generally speaking, though, **my preference is to have 3 total weight training workouts per week**. Can 4 workouts work? Yes, sometimes. But, in my experience, I've found 3 weight training workouts per week to be ideal for the vast majority of the population when it comes to maintaining muscle and strength in a deficit. Even in cases where a person can do 4 (or even 5) workouts for this purpose, *it doesn't actually work any better than 3 workouts would*. Which means, it's really only serving to increase the risk of performance or recovery related problems (thus increasing the risk of strength/muscle loss) without providing any additional benefits.

  So, if your chosen well-designed muscle building program involves 4 or more workouts per week, my recommendation is to switch to one that involves 3 instead. If your muscle building program already calls for 3 workouts per week, *you're good*. No need to go lower than that in most cases, although I do want to mention that **I've found 2 full body workouts per week to be surprisingly sufficient for maintaining muscle in a deficit as well**. So, if you're unable to consistently do 3 workouts per week for whatever reason, 2 workouts per week is the next best option I'd recommend. (And yes, *Superior Muscle Growth* contains a 2-day program just like this.)

- **Reduce volume.**
  In this context, volume refers to the total amount of work (e.g., sets and exercises) being done in a given workout or perhaps throughout the entire week combined. Just like with frequency, reducing volume from what's optimal for muscle growth in a surplus to what's *sufficient* for maintenance in a deficit is often the right idea. Also just like with frequency, the degree of reduction needed will vary by person for the exact same reasons I mentioned before.

  Generally speaking, though, **my preference is to only make some *very minor* reductions to volume (i.e., one less set here and there… nothing major at all)**. Although, this assumes that 1) the initial volume was set to optimal levels to begin with (like it is with all of my own workouts) rather than something higher, and 2) the previously mentioned reduction of

frequency takes place as well. If one or both of these qualifiers aren't in place, a larger reduction in volume may be needed.

(Note #1: If you're scratching your head wondering why these adjustments both involve doing LESS of something despite the commonly held and entirely myth-based belief that a person should do MORE (more workouts per week, more sets, more reps, more exercises) when the goal is losing fat… *hang in there*. The next section ("Weight Training To Lose Fat") will explain why that's a terrible idea.)

(Note #2: In some cases, it's possible that only one of these adjustments (frequency or volume) will be needed. In other cases, both adjustments will be needed. And in others, it's possible that neither adjustment will truly be *needed*, but it's important to understand that nothing negative will come from doing it anyway. At worst, it would just be a harmless precautionary adjustment.)

TO ADJUST, OR NOT TO ADJUST (OR TO ADJUST WHEN NEEDED)

After a person learns that the same workout program that was ideal for building muscle will usually be ideal for maintaining muscle – *with some small potential reductions to frequency and/or volume* – they often ask me if they should hold off on making these adjustments until they reach a point where they start to "feel" like they need to, or if they should just adjust in this manner right from day 1 (as in, as soon as they go into a deficit).

The truth is, both options can work just fine, and there are two lines of thinking to consider:

1. Going by feel and only adjusting when you need to can be a good thing. I'm a big fan of self-regulation when it comes to many areas of diet and training, and this is no different. The problem, however, is that I can only recommend this option when I assume a lot of uncertain things are certain.

   Specifically… I have to assume that the "intelligent" and "well-designed" muscle building program you're using for maintaining muscle is *legitimately* intelligent and well-designed. If it's one of my workouts from SMG, that assumption would be correct. But if it isn't? Then who knows. It could be a poorly designed program that only makes strength/muscle loss more likely. I also have to assume that each person can be trusted to self-regulate and actually make the necessary adjustments when they need to make them and not when it's already too late and unnecessary strength/muscle loss has already occurred.

2. On the other hand, preemptively making these adjustments from the very beginning is the safer option, because it eliminates all of the potential problems "going by feel" can cause.

So, what should you do? Well, if you are truly confident in both the workout program you're using *and* your ability to self-regulate when needed, the first option would be fine.

However, in most cases, **I tend to prefer the second option**. Preventing the problems that necessitate making these adjustments just seems like a better way to approach things and ensures that everything goes as smoothly as possible from the very beginning.

In fact, I've been recommending a pre-adjusted version of one of my most popular muscle building routines (The Muscle Building Workout Routine) for years, and I've seen countless people go on to use it with great success in terms of maintaining strength and muscle while getting anywhere from "lean" to "*extremely* lean."

It's a little something I call **The Fat Loss + Muscle Maintenance Solution**, and it's the program I'm going to recommend right now…

THE FAT LOSS + MUSCLE MAINTENANCE SOLUTION

While most of my muscle building programs can be adjusted in a similar manner, this is the one that I most often use and recommend. It goes like this…

THE SPLIT

Week #1	3-Day Upper/Lower (4th - 5th Day Frequency)
Monday	Upper Body A
Tuesday	off
Wednesday	Lower Body A
Thursday	off
Friday	Upper Body B
Saturday	off
Sunday	off
Week #2	
Monday	Lower Body B
Tuesday	off
Wednesday	Upper Body A
Thursday	off
Friday	Lower Body A
Saturday	off
Sunday	off

As you can see, it's the classic 3-day version of the upper/lower split (reduced down from the 4-day version it originally was). It rotates from upper/lower/upper one week, to lower/upper/lower the next (always going AABBAABBAABB and so on). This allows for a frequency where each muscle group gets trained once every 4th-5th day. This is the top end of the ideal frequency range I recommend for building muscle, and it's perfectly sufficient for maintaining muscle as well.

I will also mention that the exact days of the week you choose really doesn't matter at all as long as the same every-other-day format is kept intact with 2 consecutive days off at the end.

So, that's the split. Now let's take a look at the workouts…

THE WORKOUTS

Upper Body A

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Bench Press	3	4-8	2-3* minutes
2	Rows	3	4-8	2-3* minutes
3	Incline Dumbbell Press	2	6-10	1-2* minutes
4	Lat Pull-Downs	2	6-10	1-2* minutes
5	Lateral Raises	2	8-15	1-2* minutes
6	Triceps Press-Downs	2	8-15	1-2* minutes
7	Dumbbell Curls	2	8-15	1-2* minutes

Lower Body A

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Romanian Deadlifts	3	4-8	2-3* minutes
2	Leg Press	3	8-12	1-2* minutes
3	Seated Leg Curls	2	6-10	1-2* minutes
4	Standing Calf Raises	4	5-8	1-2* minutes
5	Abs	-	8-15	1 minute

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Upper Body B

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Pull-Ups	3	4-8	2-3* minutes
2	Shoulder Press	3	4-8	2-3* minutes
3	Seated Cable Row	2	6-10	1-2* minutes
4	Dumbbell Bench Press	2	6-10	1-2* minutes
5	Dumbbell Flyes	2	8-15	1-2* minutes
6	Barbell Curls	2	8-15	1-2* minutes
7	Skull Crushers	2	8-15	1-2* minutes

Lower Body B

Order	Exercise	Sets	Reps	Rest
1	Squats	3	4-8	2-3* minutes
2	Split Squats	2	6-10	1-2* minutes
3	Lying Leg Curls	3	8-12	1-2* minutes
4	Seated Calf Raises	4	8-15	1-2* minutes
5	Abs	-	8-15	1 minute

DETAILS AND CLARIFICATIONS: UPPER BODY A

- The Upper Body A workout starts with the **bench press**. This is meant to be a flat barbell bench press. I recommend having a spotter if possible.
- Up next is a **row**, which basically means some type of horizontal pull (meaning back row exercise). Pretty much any type of row would be fine here, so pick your favorite (bent over barbell or dumbbell rows, t-bar rows, chest supported rows, various Hammer Strength machine rows, whatever).

- For **incline pressing**, I recommend incline dumbbell presses. Technically, any type of incline press would be just as good here. Barbell, dumbbell, machine (Hammer Strength makes an incline chest press that I love). But, my first choice recommendation would be the incline dumbbell press. If you happen to have any preexisting shoulder problems that make incline pressing uncomfortable, try using a neutral grip (where your palms face each other).

- For **lat pull-downs**, I recommend either using an underhand grip (meaning your palms will face you) or a neutral grip (palms face each other… this grip is much less stressful on your elbows/wrists and is my preferred choice for that reason). This is because I'm going to recommend an overhand grip (palms face away from you) during the Upper Body B workout. You'll see. These are to be done in front of your head… never behind the neck.

- For **lateral raises**, you can really do whatever lateral raise you want. With dumbbells (seated or standing, one arm at a time or both together), with cables, with a lateral raise machine if your gym has a decent one. Just pick your favorite.

- For the **triceps exercise**, I recommend some form of cable pushdowns, ideally using an overhand grip on some kind of bar attachment or neutral grip using a rope attachment.

- For the **biceps exercise** on this day, I recommend any type of dumbbell curl (standing, seated, on a preacher bench, whatever). Pick your favorite.

DETAILS AND CLARIFICATIONS: LOWER BODY A

- The Lower Body A workout begins with the **Romanian deadlift (RDL)**. I recommend using a double overhand grip for these as opposed to a mixed grip (which would be one hand over, one hand under). If you ever reach a point where the weight you're deadlifting becomes too heavy to hold and your grip becomes an issue, feel free to use straps. Also, if you don't like RDLs, stiff-legged deadlifts (SLDL) could be done instead.

- For the **leg presses**, you can do these the traditional way (both legs at the same time) or single-leg if preferred. Also, this is meant to be done in a 45-degree leg press. If your gym doesn't have one, then use whatever leg press they do have.

- For the **leg curls**, some gyms have a few different types of leg curl machines… seated, standing, and lying down. You can really pick any one you want.

- Next up is **standing calf raises**. If your gym doesn't have a standing calf raise machine, feel free to do calf presses in the 45-degree leg press.

- For **abs**, do a few sets of whatever you want. Just don't go too crazy… no more than 10 minutes or so. I like various forms of weighted crunches, hanging leg/hip raises, planks, etc. Pick your favorites and keep it simple. Additional details here.

DETAILS AND CLARIFICATIONS: UPPER BODY B

- The Upper Body B workout starts with **pull-ups**. These are meant to be done using an overhand grip (and always do them in front of your head… never behind your neck). If you are unable to do pull-ups, you can do lat pull-downs or some form of assisted pull-up instead (still using an overhand grip). It's perfectly fine. However, if you're doing an assisted pull-up, your eventual goal should be to use less and less assistance until you're using none at all. And if you're someone who can already do the prescribed amount of sets and reps with your own body weight, you need to get yourself a "pull-up belt" (also called a "dip belt") and start adding some additional weight.

- For the **shoulder press**, I recommend either doing seated barbell presses (in front of you, *not* behind the neck) or seated dumbbell presses, although a decent shoulder press machine would also be fine if preferred.

- Up next are **seated cable rows**, which would ideally be done with a parallel/neutral grip (palms facing each other). If your gym doesn't have a handle like that, any other grip is fine. If your gym doesn't have a seated cable row for some reason, feel free to do any other similar horizontal back row in its place.

- Up next is the **flat dumbbell bench press**. Nothing more to add here really.

- After that we have **dumbbell flyes**. These can be done on a flat bench or a low incline if you prefer. Technically, any sort of chest isolation exercise would be equally effective here, so if you happen to prefer some kind of cable or machine fly instead, you can feel free to do that.

- For the **biceps exercise**, I recommend standing barbell curls with an EZ curl bar (it's much less stressful on your wrists/elbows than a straight bar). You could technically do any other type of curl instead if you wanted to, though.

- For the **triceps exercise**, I recommend skull crushers. I'd suggest doing these with an EZ curl bar (it's much more comfortable on the wrists/elbows than a straight bar) or with dumbbells (palms facing each other). These can be done on a flat or decline bench. Also, if preferred, some kind of overhead triceps extension exercise would be perfectly suitable in its place.

DETAILS AND CLARIFICATIONS: LOWER BODY B

- The Lower Body B workout starts with **squats**. That's meant to be barbell back squats, by the way. However, if you happen to be someone who isn't built for squats or you just have a problem doing them for whatever reason, you can replace them with leg presses (ideally using a 45-degree leg press machine).

- For the **split squats**, feel free to use a barbell or dumbbells. If you've never done any kind of split squat or lunge variation before, I'd recommend starting with dumbbells because it will be easier (and safer) to learn how to balance yourself properly. Also note that these are basic split squats (both feet stay on the floor), not the Bulgarian version (where the back foot goes up on a bench).

- For the **leg curls**, I'd recommend using a different type of leg curl machine than you used in the Lower Body A workout, assuming your gym actually has more than one type of leg curl machine. If your gym only has one kind, do it one leg at a time in the A workout, and both legs together in this workout.

- Up next are **seated calf raises**. Not much more to add here.

- For **abs**, do a few sets of whatever you want. Just don't go too crazy… no more than 10 minutes or so. I like various forms of weighted crunches, hanging leg/hip raises, planks, etc. Pick your favorites and keep it simple. Additional details here.

THE ADJUSTMENTS

Now, in addition to the reduction in frequency from 4 workouts per week to 3, let's take a look at what other changes have been made to the original version of these workouts…

- **Volume is *slightly* reduced.**
  Specifically, one set has been removed from each major muscle group's secondary exercise (with the exception of chest in Upper Body B, where one set was removed from the primary

exercise instead), and one set has been removed from one of the arm exercises in each Upper Body workout (triceps in Upper A, biceps in Upper B).

- **The lower end of the rep ranges has been extended.**
  Here's why and what it means. First, your #1 goal with every single exercise is to (at least) maintain your strength exactly like it was at the time you began your fat loss phase. That means not only lifting the same amount of weight, but lifting it for the same number of reps. Above all else, this is what you're training for during fat loss.

  But here's the thing. Due to the reduced training performance that eventually comes with being in a prolonged caloric deficit, the first place you *might* notice some degree of strength loss is when trying to maintain reps on some of your sets. So, if this ever happens and you do in fact reach a point where you lose a rep or two… *then so be it*. You'll still be in an acceptable rep range for maintaining muscle, and the weight being lifted will still remain the same (which is most important of all).

  Your goal is to obviously work your ass off to maintain reps as they are, *but just in case* you happen to lose a couple of reps here or there, the rep range has been extended to accommodate it. Here's an example. Let's say you were bench pressing 200 lbs for 3x6-8 and were doing reps of 8, 7, 6 when you started losing fat. If at some point during your fat loss phase you end up bench pressing 200 lbs for something like 6, 5, 4 or 5, 5, 5 or anything similar… *that's acceptable*. Just try to maintain that 200 lbs as best as you can.

- **The rest time asterisk.**
  You may have noticed the little * next to the rest times. It's to note that if you were previously using the lower-middle end of the prescribed rest period, it may now be a perfect time to switch over to the highest end. Why? Because your goal is to maintain strength and performance, and a deficit isn't exactly conducive to making that happen. To compensate, rest times should be increased to their maximum to help prevent any potential drop off in strength. In fact, if you need to add an additional 30-60 seconds onto the maximum prescribed rest times for certain exercises, then by all means go for it.

THE GOAL

These workout adjustments are all geared toward one thing and one thing only… **allowing you to maintain strength on every single exercise**.

Again, that's your goal here. I really can't repeat that enough. Striving to progress is still great and you may even find that you're able to do so on some exercises from time to time (that's just one of the perks of having a well-designed diet and workout program).

But if you find that progression isn't really happening much (or literally, not at all), and the best you can do is just maintain everything… *then consider it a success just the same*.

So, get in the gym… send your body the muscle maintenance signal it needs… and then get the hell out. Nothing more, nothing less.

That's The Fat Loss + Muscle Maintenance Solution.

WEIGHT TRAINING TO LOSE FAT

At this point, we've covered how to use weight training for the purpose of *building muscle* while losing fat, as well as for the purpose of *maintaining muscle* while losing fat.

Now it's time to look at how to use weight training for the third and final purpose, which is just **losing fat… *period***.

But before we can get to the fact-based methods for approaching weight training for this purpose, we first need to clear up some common misconceptions involving certain myth-based methods.

There are really just two major ones that come to mind…

MYTH-BASED METHOD #1: SPOT REDUCTION

Have you ever seen, read, heard or thought that you can burn fat from a specific area of your body by doing exercises that target that area?

So, for example, if you wanted to lose belly fat, you'd do ab exercises. If you wanted to lose leg fat, you'd do leg exercises. The same goes for chest fat (aka man boobs), back fat, arm fat, ass fat and so on.

Basically, think of any part of your body. Then, think of the most common exercises for that body part. Got them? Cool. *That's* what most people will turn to when they want to lose fat from that specific part of their body. They'll often do multiple sets of multiple exercises, and those sets will almost always be very high in reps (anywhere from 10-20 reps seems most common, although it can go as high as 50 or even 100 reps per set when it comes to ab exercises).

Sound about right?

I had a feeling it would.

There's just one tiny problem with it all.

It's bullshit.

The truth is, the entire concept of targeted fat loss – the idea that you can magically "reduce" fat from a specific "spot" on your body by simply doing exercises that target that body part – is a common weight training myth appropriately known as "**spot reduction**."

So despite how seemingly obvious and logical it would be that stomach exercises would burn stomach fat (and back exercises would burn back fat, and so on), *it's not actually true or possible*.

In reality, you are only capable of losing fat from your entire body as a whole (via a caloric deficit). Exactly where on your body you lose fat from the most, or what part of your body you lose fat from first, second, third, etc. is all predetermined by your genetics and cannot be changed whether we like it or not. At some point, the fat you lose will begin to come off from that one particular body part you wanted to lose it from the most.

No workout or exercise, type of workout or exercise, form of workout or exercise, type of equipment, amount of reps, amount of sets, amount of advanced methods or anything similar can change this.

Need some proof?

The best place to look would be at the countless real-world examples of people training as if spot reduction was possible and getting absolutely no results from it. The stereotypical overweight person with significant belly fat who spends hours at the gym doing nothing but ab exercises (who then looks exactly the same weeks/months/years later) is a classic example.

But if real-world proof isn't good enough for you, there are a few studies that come to mind as well. For example, this one and this one both looked directly at the effect ab exercises have on stomach fat, and both found that effect to be nonexistent.

My favorite spot reduction study of all, though, is one that involved the arms of tennis players.

Why tennis players? Because they spend the majority of their time using only one of their arms to hold and swing a tennis racket, which means that this one arm gets hours upon hours of additional usage compared to their non-racket arm. Which means, if spot reduction was real, surely the arm getting a ton of additional exercise would be leaner than the other arm. Right?!?!

The result…

> *"There was, however, no significant difference in the thickness of subcutaneous fat over the muscles of the arm receiving more exercise as compared to the arm receiving less exercise. These studies provide direct evidence against the validity of the concept of spot reduction."*

So, if you've ever approached weight training for fat loss in a manner that requires spot reduction to actually be possible… *you pretty much just wasted your time*.

MYTH-BASED METHOD #2: "TONING"

Then we have a collection of somewhat similar myths that I'm going to group together into a category simply called "**toning**."

As in… *getting toned*.

If you prefer, you're more than welcome to replace it with "getting defined" or "getting ripped" or "getting sculpted" or "chiseled" or "cut" or "shredded" or whatever you'd like. They're all just different words meaning the same damn thing. And in this context, they all tend to represent the same stupid weight training myths that the concept of "tone" represents.

Here are the five most common examples…

1. Heavy weights are for building muscle and getting bulky, but lighter weights are for "tone."
2. Low reps are for building muscle and getting bulky, but higher reps are for "tone."
3. Free weights are for building muscle and getting bulky, but machines are for "tone."
4. Compound exercises are for building muscle and getting bulky, but isolation exercises are for "tone."
5. Some exercises are specifically for building muscle and getting bulky, but certain exercises are considered "toning exercises" because they will only make you "toned."

Any of these sound familiar? If so, you'll be happy (or unhappy?) to know that ***they're all bullshit***.

The truth is, the only thing a muscle can do in terms of appearance is get bigger or smaller. *That's it*. You can't tone it, or sculpt it, or shape it, or define it, or [whatever else] it. You can only build more of it, maintain it, or lose it.

"Tone" and these various other adjectives are just silly words that people use to refer to a goal of wanting to lose enough of the fat covering their muscles so those muscles become more visible, thus making their body look leaner and better.

That's all these words actually mean, and not a single thing on that list above will make it happen.

Why not? Three reasons come to mind, but be sure to pay extra attention to the third one…

1. First, we already know that spot reduction is NOT possible. So, the idea that doing certain things will make a muscle bigger and bulkier while other things will "tone it" by burning the fat covering that muscle is complete nonsense.

2. Second, your body doesn't actually know (or care) what exercise it is performing or what type of equipment it is using. It doesn't think "okay, this feels like a barbell" or "this definitely seems like a muscle building exercise" or "wait… this is a machine" or "ah, this is a toning exercise!" All your body knows (or cares) about is the amount of tension, fatigue and damage an exercise generates, and varying degrees of each can be produced regardless of the type of exercise being done or equipment being used.

3. Third and most importantly of all, the popular idea/myth that lighter weight and higher reps are for "toning" and heavier weight and lower reps are for building muscle is one of the most counterproductive things you can possibly believe. Why? **Because, in reality, you lift heavy weight to build muscle, *and then lift that same heavy weight if you want to actually maintain that muscle*.**

   Which is to say that **purposely lifting lighter weight while in a deficit is the WORST thing you could do with your training**. That decrease in the amount of weight you lift represents an equal decrease in the "muscle maintenance signal" that tells your body to preserve your muscle and only burn body fat. And when that happens, your body basically thinks: "Hmmm, it looks like the demands have *decreased* since we seem to only be lifting lighter weights now. I guess some of the muscle that was built in response to heavier weight is no longer needed. I guess it's safe to start burning it for energy along with fat."

So, if you've ever believed any of these "toning" related myths before (or somehow still currently do), please realize that they are at best just wasting your time (you need less fat and/or more muscle to appear more "toned," and this sort of crap is ineffective at both), and at worst causing you to lose significantly more muscle than you should be.

FACT-BASED METHOD: METABOLIC TRAINING

And now for something that's actually… *real*.

Earlier in this book, I explained that a caloric deficit can be created through diet (eating fewer calories), exercise (burning more calories), or a combination of both. And so far, we've strictly focused on creating our deficit through diet alone.

But, it doesn't have to be that way. We can use weight training for the purpose of burning additional calories, thus helping us to create some (or possibly even all) of our deficit on any given day.

And that brings us to something called "metabolic training."

Metabolic training refers to a form of weight training that is designed to promote fat loss by maximizing the number of calories being burned both during and after your workout.

So whereas the focus with most typical forms of weight training is getting stronger for the purpose of building muscle, or maintaining strength for the purpose of maintaining muscle, the focus here is primarily on burning as many calories as possible.

Now, sure, ALL forms of weight training will burn some amount of calories. Yes, even The Beginner Weight Training Workout Routine and The Fat Loss + Muscle Maintenance Solution.

While the goals of those programs are something completely different (building or maintaining muscle), all forms of weight training – *regardless of their intended goal* – will always burn some amount of calories and thus potentially help contribute to your deficit.

However, the key difference here is that with those types of workouts, calorie-burn is a mere side effect of the intended goal. **With metabolic training, burning calories IS the intended goal.**

And for that reason, metabolic-focused workouts are designed a bit differently than strength-focused workouts. Specifically, metabolic training will involve some or all of the following…

- Higher reps per set. (Often 12-20 or more.)
- More sets per workout.
- *Very short* rest periods. (Often 30-60 seconds or less.)
- Sometimes no rest periods at all.
- Less weight being lifted. (With reps this high and rest periods this short, lighter weight *has* to be used.)
- Lots of supersets. (Aka doing two exercises back-to-back.)
- Lots of tri-sets. (Aka doing three exercises back-to-back-to-back.)
- Lots of circuits. (Aka doing any number of exercises back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back.)

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- Lots of big compound free weight and body weight exercises. (Often ones that don't involve much sitting but do involve as many muscle groups as possible.)
- Lots of barbell complexes. (Essentially circuit training using the same barbell for everything.)
- Lots of kettlebell work.
- Lots of "CrossFit" type work.
- Various other similar training components that produce the largest calorie-burn possible.

Basically, **metabolic training aims to combine anaerobic exercise with aerobic exercise, essentially turning strength-focused weight training into a form of high intensity cardio**.

And in this regard, *it's definitely a useful fat loss tool*.

The hormonal response to this type of training is legit. It burns more calories than traditional weight training workouts do, and it also burns more calories than traditional cardio does. And the "afterburn effect" (aka excess post-exercise oxygen consumption aka EPOC aka calories burned after the workout) is more substantial as well (though still less than most people think).

So, if you're interested in using weight training to cause fat loss, metabolic training can certainly be an effective way of doing it.

THE TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS

There are, however, two major problems with it.

Take a look at that list of training characteristics typically associated with metabolic workouts.

Do you notice anything… interesting?

Yeah. **The things that are most ideal for metabolic workouts and burning as many calories as possible are things that are detrimental to strength and muscle maintenance.**

As I explained before, the key to maintaining muscle while in a deficit is maintaining the same heavy strength training stimulus that allowed you to actually build that muscle in the first place.

But with the way metabolic training is designed, that's pretty much impossible.

The super high reps, the super low (or nonexistent) rest periods, the constant moving from one exercise to the next, the amount of muscular and cardiovascular fatigue being generated, the

amount of glycogen depletion taking place, and everything else involved that's aimed at maximizing the fat loss benefits of weight training… **it's all stuff that's going to hinder strength and performance, thereby preventing you from lifting as heavy as you need to lift for that muscle maintenance signal (or in the case of beginners, muscle *building* signal) to be present**.

(Note: Beginners may *temporarily* be an exception to this, because the untrained state they start out in often makes them weak enough that the "lighter weights" used in metabolic workouts *temporarily* qualify as "heavy" for them. But, even then, the key word here is "temporarily.")

Knowing this, the next thought tends to be: why not combine metabolic training with strength-focused training? Meaning, instead of making this a "one or the other" scenario, **why not do both**?

For example, why not keep the 3 strength-focused workouts in place, and then add in some metabolic-focused workouts on the other days? Or, why not just add in some metabolic work at the end of the 3 strength-focused workouts?

This is definitely the right idea. In my opinion, these are the only two options for making this type of training work. So yes, if you're going to do it, this is how you'd do it.

Unfortunately, there's still a problem… *and it's all about recovery*.

Remember, pretty much everything of a physical nature is impaired in a deficit. In terms of intense exercise like weight training, performance is reduced, volume tolerance is reduced, work capacity is reduced, fatigue is increased. And most importantly of all, overall recovery is reduced.

Which means that **there is only so much training your body will be able to handle and properly recover from**.

Yes, that point of exceeding recovery *always* exists, even while at maintenance or in a surplus. However, in a deficit, that point just moves much, much closer and becomes a whole lot easier to reach.

And that makes adding in ***more*** exercise (especially something as recovery-intensive as metabolic training) a potentially dangerous thing, because every bit of additional training you do increases your risk of reaching that point. And when that happens, strength and performance will suffer. And when that happens… *muscle is lost*.

Not to mention, you'll also feel like crap in general (e.g., excessively tired/lethargic… even more so than being in a deficit already causes) from being so overtrained.

That's why the adjustments we made earlier with The Fat Loss + Muscle Maintenance Solution involved *reducing* our training frequency and *reducing* our training volume. Instead of adding more of anything, we did less.

That's because the goal behind those adjustments is to ensure we do just enough to send the muscle maintenance signal we need *without* exceeding our already-reduced capacity to recover.

Now, does this mean metabolic training can never be used? Or can't ever work? Or can't ever be intelligently programmed?

Of course not.

There are definitely smart ways of making it work, and smart programs that use it effectively.

But, having said that, *I'm just not a fan of it*.

In my experience, the cons of metabolic training greatly outweigh the pros, and I see little to no reason for most people to even bother trying to make it a part of their fat loss program.

Instead, I've found the superior approach to be using diet alone (*maybe* some cardio… more about that in a second) to create the deficit and cause fat loss, and then allow all of your body's mental and physical resources to be put entirely toward maximizing training performance and recovery in your 3 strength-focused workouts each week.

Nothing more, nothing less.

WHAT'S NEXT

How about we stay on the subject of exercise, but move on to a different form of it?

Yup, that's right… it's time to talk about cardio.

CHAPTER 16

Cardio For Superior Fat Loss

▶ CARDIO FOR SUPERIOR FAT LOSS

Ugh. We have unfortunately – sorry, I meant *finally* – reached the chapter of this book that I've been dreading the most. If you're a regular reader of mine, you probably already know why. But just in case you aren't, let me quickly fill you in…

I hate cardio.

I hate doing it. I hate writing about it. I hate talking about it. I hate answering questions about it. I hate reading about it. I hate researching it. I hate my gym's overcrowded cardio area. I hate the $600 treadmill I bought when I was 17 for the purpose of doing fasted morning cardio at home. I hated every second of that fasted morning cardio. My dad hated the torture involved in helping me carry that treadmill up two flights of stairs. My mom hated the dents and scratches we made in the walls while doing that. And on and on and on.

I just… effing… hate it.

In addition to my unadulterated hatred for all things cardio, **I also consider it to be the most *over-rated* and *overly-given-a-shit-about* aspect of losing fat**. It's just so much less useful than most people think it is… almost laughably so. Plus, in many cases, cardio actually ends up doing a lot more harm than good.

So, having said all of that, I ABSOLUTELY CANNOT WAIT TO GET THIS CARDIO CHAPTER STARTED!!!

Wooo! Yeah! I'm super excited! Cardio, baby! Wooo! Where shall we begin???

Actually, hold on. I'll be right back.

slowly walks away from desk… repeatedly bangs head against the nearest wall

Okay, I'm back.

Let's begin with the reasons why someone would want to do cardio in the first place…

REASONS FOR CARDIO

Here now are the four most common reasons a person will decide to do cardio…

1. **To improve or maintain their level of endurance and aerobic conditioning.**
   This sort of thing tends to matter mostly to performance-oriented trainees. Meaning, people who are training primarily for performance goals rather than body composition goals. This could include a high-level athlete involved in a specific sport, the average weekend warrior looking to run a marathon, or anything in between.

2. **To improve or maintain cardiovascular health.**
   We call it "cardio" for a reason, and the cardiovascular benefits it can provide are legit. But, I don't want to talk about that now. I'd rather talk about the fact that cardio isn't necessarily the only way to get those kinds of benefits. See, there's this little under-rated fact about weight training that people rarely pay attention to. And that is, assuming you're not exclusively working in the 1-6 rep range and resting 3+ minutes between every set of every exercise, your weight training workouts will be providing a bunch of cardiovascular and cardiorespiratory benefits of their own. So even with no typical form of cardio exercise being done, you'd still be training some of those same systems to some extent with weight training alone.

   The exact difference and degree of difference is hard to say and depends on the specifics of exactly what's being compared, but the point is that if you're following some sort of intelligently designed weight training program aimed at a goal like building (or maintaining) muscle, you're still training some of those same systems and getting some of those same health benefits anyway. That's not at all meant to slight cardio or its own positive effects in this area. It's just to shine a light on the fact that weight training is not useless in this regard.

   And while we're on the subject of heart health, do you know what will provide the largest benefits of all? Getting down to a healthy body fat percentage and consistently maintaining it.

3. **They just simply *like it*.**
   As crazy as it seems to a cardio hater such as myself, there are actually some people out there who just flat out love doing cardio (you sick bastards!). Some find it really fun and enjoyable to put on some music (or a movie) and jump on the treadmill or elliptical or bike. Or maybe get out on a track or trail or street. Or take some kind of aerobics class. Or whatever else. Maybe it helps them start or end their day. Maybe it's a social activity they like to do with their friends. Maybe it makes them feel better physically and/or mentally. Maybe it's just a part of their

regular routine of "good habits." Whatever it is, some people just get some kind of "happiness" benefit from it. (Personally, *I get the opposite*.)

4. **To burn calories and cause fat loss.**
   Here's the most common reason of all. Just like with metabolic training in the previous chapter, **cardio can be used to burn calories, thus helping to create some (or all) of a person's deficit on any given day**. So, for example, if someone's maintenance level was 2500 calories and they were aiming to create a 500-calorie deficit, they could either A) eat 2000 calories per day, B) eat 2500 calories per day and then burn 500 extra calories via cardio, or C) do some combination of both (e.g., eat 2250 and burn 250 via cardio). In the end, the same deficit is created.

And… *that's it*.

Those are typically the only reasons a person will have for doing cardio. There's nothing particularly groundbreaking here, but each reason is still potentially useful in some way nonetheless.

Now, before we go any further, it's important to remember that the book you're currently reading is called *Superior Fat Loss*. Not *Superior Endurance Training*, or *Superior Conditioning*, or *Superior Cardiovascular Health* (although the various guidelines contained within this book will be quite beneficial to all aspects of health, including cardiovascular).

The point being, this is a book about getting the best fat loss results possible, and this is a chapter about using cardio *strictly for that purpose*.

So while these other usages of cardio each have their merits, they are all separate goals with separate considerations to take into account and separate ideal guidelines to follow.

We, however, will only be looking at cardio from the perspective of achieving superior fat loss.

REASONS AGAINST CARDIO

Now let's take a look at some of the most common reasons for *not* doing cardio…

1. **It can cut into recovery, increase the risk of muscle loss, and make lots of things worse.**
   Cardio, like metabolic training, is additional exercise… and additional exercise requires additional recovery. While this has the potential to be problematic at any time and under any condition, the potential is at its highest when we're in the energy-deficient (and recovery-impaired) state we need to be in for fat loss to occur. *Which we are*. Which means, the more exercise we do, the more risk we pose to our ability to adequately (let alone, *optimally*) recover. Not just in terms of the body parts being used the most (which is typically the legs, with most forms of cardio), but also the central nervous system (CNS)… which affects *everything*. And if recovery begins to suffer, strength and performance will suffer. And when strength and performance suffers, so will your ability to build or maintain muscle. As if that wasn't bad enough, reaching this point of doing "too much" will also worsen many of the hormonal and metabolic issues we talked about earlier.

   Now, exactly how much of an impact cardio has in this regard is hard to say, as it depends on the exact frequency, duration and intensity of the activity being done. For example, 3 cardio sessions per week will have less of an impact than 5-7 sessions. 30 minutes of cardio will have less of an impact than 60-120 minutes. A low intensity activity – like brisk walking – would have little to no impact compared to a more moderate intensity activity… such as jogging. And neither would have nearly as much of an impact as something with a high intensity – like HIIT (high intensity interval training… such as sprinting) – which can almost be like adding an extra weight training workout in terms of the stress it places on your body and how recovery-intensive it is.

2. **It can cause people to burn less calories throughout the rest of their day.**
   Some people find that cardio makes them feel good and energized later on. Many other people, however, find that it mostly just makes them feel more tired and lethargic than usual. The problem with this is that feeling more tired and lethargic than usual causes people to do less/move less than usual as well. And when that happens, you end up in a scenario where you're unintentionally and/or unknowingly burning less calories during normal daily activity than you otherwise would have been.

3. **It can cause overuse injuries.**
   Find someone who does a decent amount of cardio on a regular basis and has been doing so

for a while, and ask them how their knees feel. Or, walk through the cardio section of your gym and take note of how many people are wearing a sleeve around their knee(s). This isn't a wacky coincidence. Any sort of repetitive activity involving joint impact will often lead to overuse injuries at some point, and cardio fits that description perfectly. This is why issues involving knees, ankles and/or feet are so common among cardio fanatics.

4. **Typical forms of it are boring as hell.**

When most people do cardio, it involves being indoors on a treadmill, bike, elliptical, StairMaster, or something similar. And, as I learned back when I was 17 and at home on my own treadmill 4 days a week, that shit is boring as hell. The problem (besides the boredom itself) with this is that when people rely on doing something they'd describe as "boring as hell" to get them into their required deficit on a given day, they become a whole lot less likely to actually DO that "boring as hell" thing and burn the calories they need to burn to end up in the deficit they need to be in. It's the old "people are less likely to consistently do things they hate doing" effect.

5. **It can cause people to overeat.**

Remember earlier when I explained that both research and real-world experience show that people frequently underestimate how many calories they eat, and overestimate how many calories they burn? Well, there's a scenario that's seen over and over again in the context of cardio that involves the latter half of this counterproductive fact. And that is, a person will do cardio for the purpose of burning calories/losing fat, and they'll assume they burned *a lot* of calories. In reality, however, they actually burned much less than they think they did. *But they don't realize this*. Instead, what often happens is this "reward mentality" kicks in and the person thinks "I just jogged on a treadmill for 30 minutes, surely I can now afford to eat this additional 1000-calorie meal." And they do that, never realizing they actually only burned 250 calories. Speaking of which…

6. **It doesn't burn nearly as many calories as people think it does/wish it did.**

The average person doing a typical form of cardio at a typical intensity will usually end up burning about 5-10 calories per minute. Possibly more with a higher intensity activity, and possibly more if the person weighs more (a bigger body burns more calories than a smaller body). But, on average, 5-10 calories per minute is usually a decent estimate. Think about that for a second. 30 minutes on the treadmill? You'll probably burn about 150-300 calories. An hour on the bike? Probably between 300-600 calories. While this is definitely still *something*, the fact is that cardio doesn't burn nearly as many calories as most people think, hope or incorrectly assume it does. Yes, even when taking EPOC/afterburn into account

(another aspect of cardio that causes significantly less calorie-burn than people assume). Regardless, you'd still need to do A LOT of cardio (often) and/or very high intensity forms of cardio (often) for it to truly have the significant calorie-burning effect most people think it does/would like it to. And the side effect of doing that is a much greater risk of muscle loss (among other problems).

7. **It's extremely inefficient. And usually harder, less convenient and less sustainable, too.**
Think of it this way… let's say someone needs to create a 500-calorie deficit each day (just a random example). Now, which sounds like a more efficient way of doing that? Going to the gym and spending 60 minutes on a treadmill… and doing that every single day (or however many days per week you plan to use cardio to create your deficit). Or, by simply not eating those 500 calories in the first place… a task that literally takes zero seconds to accomplish and can be done anywhere, anytime. Yeah… *exactly*. It's typically going to be much more convenient and sustainable for a person to just eat a few hundred fewer calories per day than it will be for them to burn those same few hundred calories every day through additional activity.

   And sure, something like HIIT will burn more calories in less time than a low/moderate intensity activity (like walking or jogging) would, thus being the more time-efficient of the two. But, not only would it *still* be less efficient compared to eating fewer calories, it's also going to be a shitload harder to do and require infinitely more physical and mental effort to consistently make happen.

8. **It's extremely easy to out-eat.**
Let's say someone made the decision to go to bed an hour and a half early so they can wake up an hour and a half earlier than usual the next day to give themselves time to travel to the gym and spend an hour on the treadmill (burning around 500 calories) before going to work or school or wherever else. Awesome job! Later on, however, they ate two extra handfuls of almonds and wiped out that entire hour of cardio (and the 500 calories it burned) in the span of about 3 minutes. Sure, the real problem here is the issue of noncompliance that caused this example person to eat more than they were supposed to, but the point remains the same. It's laughably easy to out-eat what you can burn via exercise. Or the way that point is usually phrased… you can't out-train a bad diet. This old video shows an entertaining example of this in action.

9. **It's completely optional.**
When a person decides they want to lose fat, they often get this idea in their head that they

MUST do cardio in order for fat loss to happen. It's like word association or something. Fat loss? CARDIO!!!! People seem to be under the impression that it's a requirement. In reality, however, it's not a requirement at all. In fact, *it's completely optional*.

A caloric deficit? That's the sole requirement for losing fat, and that can (and in my opinion, *should*) be accomplished through diet alone quite easily. A strength-focused weight training program? Assuming you want to build or maintain muscle while losing that fat… that's also a requirement. But cardio? While it can certainly be a potentially useful fat loss tool, it's not actually required in any way whatsoever. And not only that, but like I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and explained throughout this list, cardio is both highly over-rated as a fat loss tool and easily capable of having a detrimental effect on your results.

And those are the primary reasons for *not* doing cardio.

Compare this list against the list of reasons *for* doing cardio, and I think you may have a pretty good idea of what my official cardio recommendations are going to be.

Let's find out how right you are…

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Let's see, how shall I put this so it's as simple and understandable as possible?

Alright, I got it…

> **Do as little cardio as possible. Or, just do no cardio whatsoever.**

Taaadaaa!

Why do I think cardio should be kept to a minimum or avoided completely? Because I feel the potential cons of cardio **GREATLY** outweigh the potential pros.

And because it just plain sucks and I hate it. But mostly the first reason.

To quote Alan Aragon on this subject: "*I'm a strong proponent of doing the least amount of formal cardio as necessary to reach the goal, starting with zero.*"

My thoughts exactly.

Basically, I'd sum it up like this. I recommend:

1. **Using diet alone to create the deficit and cause fat loss…**
2. **Using weight training to build or maintain muscle while that fat is being lost, and…**
3. **Saving cardio as a completely optional secondary tool to consider using down the road if a point is ever reached when A) calorie intake needs to be reduced to keep fat loss progress happening, *and* B) the person feels that lowering their calorie intake any further at that point would be too difficult and/or problematic… so they'd rather start burning more calories via cardio than eating any less.**

In *most* cases with *most* people, this hypothetical point will either never come at all (meaning, you'll be able to reach your fat loss goals without ever needing cardio) or will only come when the person is close to reaching their goal level of leanness and/or when they are attempting to get down to very low levels of body fat (which is when a person's calorie intake will be at its lowest).

Generally speaking, it's more likely that women will reach this point than men, because men typically weigh more and naturally have higher calorie intakes than women do.

Which means, a man who is at a very low body fat percentage will still be consuming more calories than a woman who is at similar levels of leanness.

This not only makes things harder for the woman in this example (since she's eating a good deal less than the man despite being equally lean), but is also potentially problematic due to the higher risk of nutrient deficiencies posed by consuming *even less* food/calories at a time when her food/calorie intake is already quite low.

That's a perfect example of an ideal time to throw in some cardio to increase calorie output rather than attempting to decrease calorie intake any further. **The point where you don't *want* to eat any less, or when doing so can cause problems.**

But again, this is the sort of scenario that is most likely to occur when a person is trying to get *really lean*.

And even then, cardio still doesn't necessarily become a requirement. Plenty of people have gotten down to *extremely* low body fat percentages (leaner than many of the people reading this book would ever even be interested in getting to) without ever doing a single second of cardio.

But my point here is that this just becomes the most likely time for cardio to be beneficial to the person and/or preferred by the person.

Is it the only time? Of course not.

There are plenty of people who are at a moderate/high body fat percentage (maybe even obese) who still have a long way to go before reaching their fat loss goals (hell, maybe they haven't even started losing fat yet), **but would still prefer to use cardio at that point to help create some or all of their deficit on certain days**. **Or, maybe they're just one of those crazy people who actually enjoy doing it.**

That's fine.

Even though this goes against my own personal preferences and my recommendation to use diet to set the deficit and hold off on cardio until a point is reached where it's truly needed (if ever at all), **the fact remains that different people need and benefit from different things at different points**.

Cardio is no different.

Which is all my way of saying that **personal needs and preferences should play the largest role in dictating whether cardio becomes a part of your fat loss program, as well as *when* cardio becomes a part of your fat loss program (if ever at all)**.

Meaning…

- If you hate cardio, don't want to do it, have no interest in doing it, have no time to do it, have no need for doing it, have no problem creating your deficit through diet alone and would prefer to do it that way and never do any cardio whatsoever at any point… then guess what? **You should do no cardio whatsoever at any point.**

- If, however, you need/want to use cardio as a tool from the very beginning, or find that you need/want to use it at some point in the middle, or you've kept it in your toolbox till the end waiting to see if you'd ever reach the point of needing/wanting to use it (*and that point finally comes*)… then guess what? **You should use cardio as a fat loss tool.**

If you fall into that first group, congrats! You're done with this chapter and free to skip a couple of pages to the next one. Have an awesome time getting lean and reaching your fat loss goals without ever doing a minute of cardio. Also, we should hang out sometime. I have a feeling we'd get along quite well.

But if you fall into that second group, you'd probably like to know how I recommend using cardio for this purpose. Well…

HOW TO USE CARDIO (*ONLY* IF YOU NEED/WANT TO USE IT)

To get the best combination of minimizing/preventing the various "cons" of cardio (recovery issues, muscle loss, overuse injuries, etc.) while still getting some useful degree of calorie-burning effect, my recommendation is this:

Do cardio 1-6 times per week for 20-60 minutes at a time comprised of nothing more than a low intensity steady state (LISS) activity, ideally brisk-paced walking (or something equally light and low-impact). If possible, do it outdoors to minimize boredom and get some sun/fresh air.

And that's it.

Anything too frequent, too long, and/or too intense will cause problems, which makes our goal here to do the least amount possible to get the benefits we're looking for.

This is what I've found to be the ideal way of doing that.

Now, does that mean nothing else will work? Or that everything else will cause problems? *Nope*.

Does that mean other durations can't work? Or other frequencies? *Nope*.

Does that mean moderate intensity activity (e.g., jogging) or high intensity activity (e.g., HIIT) can never be used effectively without causing problems? *Nope*.

It just means that this is what I've found to be the superior approach, so this is what I recommend.

Simple as that.

As for when this cardio should be done, your rest days from weight training would be my first choice. The next best option would be on the same days as weight training, but at separate times (e.g., maybe weight training in the morning, cardio in the evening). The next best option would be after your weight training workout.

Really, as long as you're not doing cardio before weight training (which would make you unnecessarily fatigued for the more important, more technical, and more physically and mentally demanding form of exercise), the timing is unlikely to matter much, if at all.

Wait, what's that you say?

"But what about fasted morning cardio?!? I thought that was the most effective way/time to do cardio for burning maximum amounts of body fat?!?"

Nope, that's horseshit. Full details here. In my experience, the only meaningful difference you're likely to get with fasted cardio vs non-fasted cardio is an increased risk of muscle loss. No thanks.

And with that, we've *finally* finished the cardio chapter.

Please give me a minute to bask in the glory of this accomplishment.

Wow.

I never thought this day would come.

I'd like to thank my parents. My girlfriend. My nonexistent kids. And most of all, the treadmill I bought when I was 17 and happily gave away soon after.

Thank you. Thank you all.

May your hatred of cardio continue to blossom for years to come, just as mine has.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Now it's time to run the hell away from the topic of cardio and move on to what may very well be the aspect of fat loss that confuses people the most…

Plateaus.

CHAPTER 17

Weight Loss Plateaus

WEIGHT LOSS PLATEAUS

As of right now, you are fully prepared to lose fat. You know exactly *what* to do, and exactly *how* (and *why*) to do it. You're now ready to make the best progress possible while reaching all of your long-term goals.

Awesome!

I should tell you, though, **that getting to that point isn't going to be a completely linear process**.

Sure, you'll get where you want to be, but the ride there isn't going to be perfectly smooth.

If you've ever lost any meaningful amount of fat before, or have even just spent some time trying to do so, you probably already know what I'm talking about.

And that is the fact that weight loss never consistently happens at your ideal intended rate from day 1 until the very end. As lovely as that would be, it's highly unlikely to ever happen outside of rare cases when a person's long-term weight loss goal is super small (e.g., 5 lbs).

What's much more likely to happen instead is that your rate of weight loss will slow down at times, occasionally go in the opposite direction (i.e., weight gain) at other times, and even come to a complete stop – *sometimes for multiple weeks in a row* – at others.

And while these are all slightly different things, their potential causes are virtually the same. So much so that by focusing primarily on that third scenario – a scenario known as a **weight loss plateau** – we'll actually end up covering everything.

So, let's do that.

WHAT IS A WEIGHT LOSS PLATEAU?

Let me set the scene for you…

You start putting your diet and workout into action, and you also start tracking your progress.

A few days go by… a week goes by… a few weeks go by.

And so far, everything is going splendidly! You're losing weight at your ideal rate, and you're happy and motivated by your progress. Nice!

Assuming you continue doing everything you're supposed to be doing, this great consistent progress may even continue for some additional number of weeks, sometimes even months.

But then… at some point… **it stops**.

This is a weight loss plateau.

Sometimes it's a gradual thing. For example, maybe you were consistently losing 1 lb per week for a bit, but then started losing 0.75 lb per week, followed by 0.5 lb, then 0.25 lb, and then… **nothing at all**.

Other times, you may go from consistently losing 1 lb per week for many weeks to suddenly losing **nothing** the very next week.

And once this point of plateauing is reached, it can last for very different lengths of time.

Sometimes just a week, sometimes a month, and sometimes it even seems to last permanently… thus ending a person's progress whether they like it or not (and possibly causing them to do something stupid, like switch to some terrible quick-fix fad diet, buy some useless supplement, or give up altogether and return to their old habits). Fun!

But regardless of when it happens, how long it lasts or what caused it in the first place, there's one thing that every weight loss plateau has in common…

The person who reached the plateau is *unhappy* about it.

But the funny thing is, there's really no reason to be unhappy at all.

Let me explain…

WHY A PLATEAU ISN'T ACTUALLY A BAD THING

People always view a weight loss plateau as this terrible, unexpected, unexplained, **negative thing that represents nothing but their failure to make progress**.

In reality, plateaus aren't any of that.

In fact, not only are they not truly *bad*, they could even be considered… dare I say… *a good thing*.

Crazy, I know, but hear me out.

For years, whenever someone told me they hit a plateau and seemed some combination of angered, annoyed, frustrated, disappointed and depressed about it (as damn near everyone is), the very first thing I'd say to them is something along the lines of this:

"Relax. Nothing bad actually happened. Regaining some fat would be the closest thing to a 'bad thing' in this scenario, and even that can be rectified quite easily. But a couple of weeks of simply not losing any? At worst, it's just a slight delay. At best, it's a sign that lets you know it might be time to adjust somewhere to ensure that your progress continues. That's really all it is."

To me, a weight loss plateau has always been a **completely neutral occurrence**. Maybe not "good" in a traditional sense, but definitely not bad. Not even a little. And that has always been the message I've tried to get across to people when they experience it.

Interestingly enough, though, this decade-old perspective of mine actually changed a tiny bit after reading something Alan Aragon wrote in a 2014 issue of his fantastic monthly research review (AARR).

Ever since then, I've switched from trying to help people see that plateaus aren't bad, to helping them see that they are, in fact, *good*.

And the point Alan made that caused me to see things this way was essentially this:

Instead of viewing a plateau as you *failing* to make progress and *failing* to lose weight, think of it more as the *successful maintenance* of the weight loss progress you've already made.

That is, after all, no easy task in its own right, and under any other circumstance would be considered a major (and crucial) accomplishment.

People just seem to forget this when it happens in the form of a plateau compared to when it happens of their own doing. But regardless of how it happens, it's still the same successful maintenance of the successful weight loss that has already taken place.

And that's a good thing.

Now, sure, maintaining progress might not seem as good or feel as satisfying as making the additional progress you're still trying to make, but it's STILL a positive thing.

The second-best-case scenario, if you will.

Yet most people are too busy viewing their plateau negatively to ever realize this. They're too busy being depressed and discouraged and unhappy and confused by it, and stressing out and freaking out because of it, and maybe even hopping aboard the self-hate train to mentally punish themselves for "failing" in this manner.

This is the COMPLETE OPPOSITE of how a plateau should be perceived.

To quote Alan from that aforementioned issue of his AARR: "*On the contrary, this is merely a 'landing' on the way down the non-linear staircase of weight loss.*"

Nailed it.

So, from now on, instead of thinking, feeling and doing all of the usual illogical things people think, feel and do upon reaching a plateau, I want you to ONLY think/feel/do the following:

1. **Take a minute (or a few minutes… hell, take the whole day) to look back at how far you've come and how much progress you've made.** Good job! Congrats on your results thus far.

2. **Take note of how long your progress has been stalled for during this plateau, and then replace the words "stalled for" with the words "successfully maintained."** Good job once again. The inability to maintain weight loss results is one of the biggest problems people have both during the process and after reaching their goals, and this "plateau" is proof that you're currently doing it just fine. That's something to be happy about, not depressed by. As Alan also goes on to mention in his research review, a long-term plateau is essentially everyone's ultimate goal in the end. You know… permanently maintaining the progress that was made (and not re-gaining). That's absolutely key. You can therefore think of every plateau you hit along your way to that final one as a temporary "maintenance practice period."

3. **Realize that plateaus are nothing more than a completely normal and completely temporary *pause* in progress that comes about for very simple reasons.** And in the vast majority of cases, they should be *expected* to happen at some point, and sometimes multiple points depending on how much weight a person needs to lose. In fact, I'd even go as far as to say that plateaus are *unavoidable* and *guaranteed to happen* for many people.

4. **Realize that a plateau is just a natural part of the process.** It's NOT an obstacle in your way that's preventing you from reaching your goals. It's just something that occurs on your way to reaching those goals. Think of it as a mile marker… not a hurdle.

5. **Realize that there is nothing even remotely mysterious or unexplainable about what causes a plateau, and nothing even slightly confusing about what needs to be done when it happens.** More about that in a minute.

6. **Realize that a plateau is only going to help you.** It's a signal from your body that lets you know it may be time to make some minor adjustments to get progress happening again.

Cool?

Cool.

Now that your perspective on plateaus is a *logical* one, it's time to discuss why they happen in the first place, and what you should (and shouldn't) do when that time comes.

TRUE PLATEAUS VS FALSE PLATEAUS

As you'll soon see, there are quite a few different reasons for why a weight loss plateau occurs. In fact, there are dozens of potential causes and combinations of causes, and that can make things a bit complicated.

Fortunately, there's a very easy way for us to uncomplicate it.

And that is by breaking things up into **two different categories of weight loss plateaus**:

1. **True Plateaus**
   This is… well… *a true plateau*. This is when fat loss progress stops for 3-4 consecutive weeks or longer as a result of the completely normal and often unavoidable physiological changes that are *supposed* to eventually cause fat loss to stop. In these cases, small adjustments will need to be made to get fat loss happening again like it should be.

2. **False Plateaus**
   This is the opposite of that. This is when fat loss progress stops because of other (often self-made) reasons that do not fit the above description, or when fat loss *doesn't actually stop*, but something else happens that makes us *think* it did.

Let's now take a look at the causes of both types of plateaus, starting with the false variety.

THE CAUSES OF FALSE PLATEAUS

False plateaus are most often caused by one or more of the following…

1. KNOWN NONCOMPLIANCE

By far, **the most common reason why a person stops losing weight is simply because they've stopped doing what needs to be done for weight to be lost**.

Meaning, they are no longer eating the number of calories they are supposed to be eating (i.e., they're overeating), or they're no longer burning the number of calories they are supposed to be burning (i.e., they're missing workouts), or some combination of the two, **and a caloric deficit no longer exists**.

And when the caloric deficit stops, fat loss progress stops right along with it… thus making it appear as though a plateau has been reached.

However, this is not a *true* plateau.

This is a self-made *false* plateau caused by nothing more than basic noncompliance.

Why does this happen, you ask? Please allow me to quote myself from earlier in this book:

> *"For any or all of the usual reasons. A lack of motivation. An overreliance on motivation. A lack of consistency. A lack of self-control. General laziness. An inability to form the necessary habits. Using an unsustainable dietary approach that conflicts with personal preferences. And so on. Whatever it is, the person knows they are failing to comply with the requirements of their diet and/or workout, and that's preventing a deficit from consistently being present."*

And so we have ourselves a false plateau with a very obvious solution: get back to doing what needs to be done for a deficit to consistently be present.

2. UNKNOWN NONCOMPLIANCE

Now we have the exact same thing, but with a subtle twist.

Just like before, **the required deficit no longer exists as a result of the person eating more and/or burning less than they're supposed to**. **Only in this case, *they are completely unaware of it*.**

To once again quote myself from earlier…

> *"Rather, they THINK they're doing everything right, when in reality they are unknowingly making mistakes somewhere (most often in the tracking of their calorie intake and/or output) which cause them to end up eating more calories and/or burning less calories than they think they are."*

So, it's just another version of a self-made *false* plateau… only this time it was *unknowingly* self-made.

The worst part of all is that despite how common this problem is, most people will refuse to believe it's *their* problem.

So much so that they'll often react defensively when it's suggested, as if to say "How dare you accuse me of eating more/burning less than I think I am! I'm doing everything as perfectly and accurately as can be, 100% of the time, and I never make mistakes! Don't ever question or doubt me like that again!"

Lolz.

Look, I've heard every version of this story you can possibly imagine.

You're counting calories and tracking your diet and maybe also doing tons of cardio as well… and you can GUARANTEE that you're eating the amount you're intending to eat, and burning the amount you're intending to burn, and a caloric deficit is DEFINITELY present. And you're absolutely, positively, super-mega-ultra-sure of this. So sure that you may even be willing to swear on the lives of your children to prove it. I hear ya.

But here's the thing. If you claim to be "doing everything right" yet aren't losing fat… then guess what? ***You're doing something wrong*.**

Whether you ever come to realize it or choose to agree with it, your lack of fat loss is the ultimate guaranteed proof that it's true.

Now, what is it that you are unknowingly doing wrong? In most cases, you're probably making one (or more) of the following mistakes:

1. Underestimating

As I explained earlier, if there's one thing damn near every nutritionist and diet professional

can agree on, it's that people trying to lose weight almost *ALWAYS* **underestimate** how many calories they are actually eating. It happens all the time and has been confirmed in studies (this one showed that the subjects underestimated their calorie intake by an average of 47%… which is huge). Some people underestimate the quantity of food they consume (like thinking you ate 1 serving when you really ate 2 or more), while others underestimate the amount of calories it contained (like thinking a meal was 500 calories when it was really 1000). Some underestimate both.

2. **Tracking Mistakes**

   As we also covered earlier, many people just screw up during the serving-size-measuring process and take significantly more food than they think they're taking. Remember those videos I linked to (this, this and this) showing the differences in accuracy between using measuring spoons/measuring cups/eyeballing it vs using a digital food scale? These types of tracking mistakes happen all the time.

3. **Under-Reporting**

   Remember when I brought up the topic of "free foods" earlier? You know, how some people are under the impression that there are special "clean" and "healthy" foods they can eat unlimited amounts of and not count? As if they contain magical calories? Perhaps you also remember how others often eat "tiny" amounts of food here and there and assume it's so insignificant that they don't even need to bother counting it? If so, do you also remember how *not true* all of this was and how quickly these "I-didn't-even-realize-it" calories can add up? And the common real-world example of this I showed? I certainly hope so. In addition, some people simply forget what (or how much) they ate and end up accidentally not counting it for that reason alone.

4. **Lying**

   As odd as it may seem, many people just flat out lie about how much they're truly eating. Why? Usually because they're too embarrassed to admit what/how much they eat (even to themselves), yet apparently not too embarrassed to continuously fail to lose weight because of it.

5. **Overestimating**

   Now take everything I said before about how people underestimate calorie intake, and change it to *overestimate* calorie *output*. The same studies show this, too (in this one, the subjects overestimated calories burned via exercise by an average of 51%… which is huge). People do some form of exercise – typically cardio – and assume they burned "tons of calories." The

problem is, no form of cardio truly burns anything resembling "tons of calories." Like I said before, typical forms of cardio done at typical intensities will burn anywhere from 5-10 calories per minute. Yet people will finish their 30-minute jog on the treadmill and think they burned 1000 calories. As if that wasn't bad enough, that "reward mentality" we talked about before will often kick-in, thus giving people the false mindset that they can allow themselves to eat extra calories since they supposedly burned "so many" while exercising. They then proceed to cancel out whatever smaller amount of calories they did burn (and then some), and then wonder why they're not losing weight despite "working out all the time."

Now I'm not accusing you of being an under-estimator, or an over-estimator, or an under-reporter, or a bad measurer, or a liar, or someone who's just bad at counting. I'm just telling you the facts. And the fact is, this form of false plateau happens all the time.

So, if your weight loss progress has stopped for a significant period of time, but yet you know you're "doing everything right," consider this a friendly reminder that you're probably wrong and should probably double (or triple) check to find out.

3. "STARVATION MODE"

Now we have what is essentially an entertaining subcategory of unknown noncompliance that people mistakenly (and laughably) assume is a mysterious state known as "**starvation mode**."

Starvation mode (sometimes referred to as "survival mode") **is built around the idea that not eating enough calories will cause fat loss to stop**. As in, if you eat too few calories, your metabolism breaks or completely shuts down or something equally hilarious, and in an effort to keep you alive, your body will **HOLD ON** to all of your body fat and prevent you from losing any of it until… *wait for it*… you eat MORE calories.

This concept/myth then leads to the following type of conversation on weight loss forums and throughout social media…

Person A: "I'm eating [insert some excessively low number of calories here… typically 600, 800, 1000 or 1200] calories per day, but I'm not losing any weight! What's my problem?"

Person B: "Your body has entered starvation mode because you're not eating enough, so it's holding on to all of your body fat and stopping you from losing weight."

Person C: "Yeah, Person B is absolutely right. I was in starvation mode myself at one point, and it sucked! Eventually I was in it for so long that I started gaining fat because I was eating so little! Once I started eating more, I instantly began losing weight again."

Person D: "Um, you people have no idea wtf you're talking about. Read this article."

Thank you, Person D.

It's because of the many Person Ds of the world and the fact that they frequently link to *my* starvation mode article (which then sends traffic to my website from these sources) that I know just how often these stupid conversations are happening.

Why do I call them stupid? Because the entire basis of the concept of starvation mode – that not eating enough will stop fat loss (or cause fat gain) – *is as stupid as it gets*.

In that aforementioned article of mine, I use Holocaust victims, starving children in Africa, reality show contestants, anorexics, the infamous Minnesota Starvation Experiment, and a whole lot of commonsense to show why starvation mode is nothing more than a stupid myth. Feel free to read it for all the fun details. This too.

But this now brings us to the obvious question that is relevant to the topic we're covering…

If starvation mode isn't real, then how do I explain how there are so many overweight people who are eating as little as 600-1200 calories per day but still aren't losing any weight?

That's easy.

They aren't actually eating 600-1200 calories per day.

Instead, in the VAST majority of cases, **some form of unknown noncompliance is taking place**.

Meaning, for one or more of the five reasons we just covered (underestimating, miscalculating, etc.), the person is unknowingly eating more than they think they are, burning less than they think they are, or some combination of the two… thus causing them to eat much more than the 600-1200 calories they claim to be eating… *and no deficit exists*. Simple as that.

For proof, look no further than that same study I referenced earlier. It was actually done on "obese subjects who *reportedly* restrict their intake to less than 1200 kcal per day." In reality, it turned out that they were eating a shitload more than they thought/claimed.

Less commonly, though, there's actually a slightly different second scenario taking place.

The person is indeed eating the stupidly/excessively low number of calories they claim to be… *on certain days*. BUT, they are then massively overeating (or, more accurately in these scenarios, *binge-eating*) on the other days **to a degree that cancels out whatever extreme deficit they created and causes them to end up breaking even at maintenance for the week**. And when you're at maintenance instead of in a deficit, *you stop losing weight*.

Hello false plateau!

This is how you get people (fun fact: it's almost always women) who claim to be on some crazy low-calorie starvation diet eating 600-1200 calories per day but still aren't losing any weight.

In reality, they're either eating more than they think they are, or they're legitimately eating the amount they claim *some of the time* (be it as little as one to as many as six days per week), but then overeating to the tune of 3000-6000+ calories on the other day(s) due to the excessive hunger that the previous extreme restriction caused.

Sometimes it's so bad that this restrict-and-binge cycle doesn't just land the person at maintenance for the week and *prevent* fat loss… it actually puts them into a surplus, thereby *causing fat gain*. This, along with other causes of false plateaus still to come (spoiler alert: water retention), is how you get people saying "I starved myself eating 800 calories per day but I still gained weight! It must be starvation mode!!"

No, it's not.

But how does any of this explain the next claim these people often make, which is that they finally started losing weight again as soon as they began eating MORE calories?

Well, there are actually two very logical explanations for this.

First, because the "more calories" they are eating eliminates the excessively low-calorie days they previously had, which prevents the massively large binges those low-calorie days were previously causing, **which means the person actually ends up eating LESS total weekly calories now than they had been**, despite thinking they're "eating more calories."

Another possible explanation is something I went on a brief tangent about earlier, which is that if the person is legitimately eating more now after a period of eating significantly/excessively less, it would cause cortisol levels to drop. Guess what happens when cortisol levels drops? **Water**

retention subsides… thus causing instant "weight loss" strictly in the form of water weight, not body fat. (And if the deficit is as excessive as it usually is in these cases, the water retention can be quite substantial.)

The simple solution for all of this starvation mode based nonsense is to A) double and triple check the tracking of your calorie intake/output, because there's probably some unknown noncompliance taking place somewhere that's making you think you're eating less/burning more than you truly are, and B) completely avoid these types of stupidly/dangerously low-calorie starvation diets, because they will only cause problems.

4. "MUSCLE WEIGHS MORE THAN FAT"

Here's another myth that goes back to something we talked about a couple of chapters ago.

That is the idea that you're losing fat AND building muscle at the same time, and doing both at the exact same rate such that the gain in muscle consistently offsets the loss in body fat… thus causing a *weight* loss plateau even though *fat* is still being lost just fine.

The equal gain in muscle is supposedly just "hiding it" on the scale.

And while this concept sounds nice, it has a few major flaws.

For starters, we learned earlier that intermediate/advanced trainees are unlikely to gain anything resembling a truly meaningful amount of muscle while in a deficit. In many cases, they won't gain any whatsoever. **So, if you are past the beginner stage and think THIS is the cause of your weight loss plateau, you're as wrong as wrong can be.** That just doesn't happen.

But what about the people who CAN build a meaningful amount of muscle in a deficit? Meaning… beginners? What about them?

Well, as I mentioned earlier, beginners are definitely capable of building enough muscle in a deficit to slow down their weight loss progress on the scale to some small degree (even though fat loss is still happening at the same intended rate). This is absolutely true.

But can muscle be gained both quickly and consistently enough to *fully* balance out the weight of the fat that's being lost? And do so week after week after week? To the point where it causes a weight loss plateau that lasts for weeks all while body fat is still being lost at the intended rate?

I'd say that is HIGHLY unlikely.

The reason why is because muscle growth is an *extremely slow* process. How slow exactly? I sometimes like to use the term "painfully slow" when describing it.

Compared to fat loss, I'd put it like this. The average person can often lose an amount of body fat PER WEEK that is equal to (or in some cases, exceeds) the amount of muscle they can build PER MONTH. This is even worse with women, as they tend to build muscle at about HALF the already slow rate that men do. (*Superior Muscle Growth* covers all of this in detail.)

And keep in mind that this is under *the best possible circumstances*. As in, when a person is in a caloric surplus and their primary focus is on building muscle as quickly and effectively as possible.

But under *these* circumstances? When a person is in a caloric deficit and their primary focus is on losing fat? Um… what's slower than "painfully slow?" Insert that here.

So, unless you happen to be a beginner that's attempting to lose fat at a rate that's a lot slower than it should be for some reason, it's pretty safe to assume that you will not be gaining muscle at a rate that completely balances out your rate of fat loss for weeks at a time.

That would be a false plateau.

What's actually causing your weight loss plateau in these cases is either the fact that no deficit exists (and therefore no fat is being lost) due to known or unknown noncompliance (this tends to be the culprit most of the time), or because of something else on this list that's still to come.

5. IMPROPER TRACKING OF BODY WEIGHT

Since a weight loss plateau is dependent on what your body weight is (or really, *isn't*) doing, the easiest way to end up in a "false plateau" scenario is by improperly tracking that weight.

Because when that happens, **it's pretty easy for a person to end up *thinking* they're not losing any weight when they are actually losing it just fine**.

How can this happen, you ask? Here are a few common examples I see on a regular basis:

- Person A compares what they weigh today to what they weigh tomorrow.
- Person B weighs themselves before eating/drinking/pooping on some days, and after eating/drinking/pooping on other days.
- Person C weighs themselves at random times throughout a single day.

- Person D compares their weight first thing in the morning today, to their weight after lunch tomorrow, to their weight after their evening workout the day after that.
- Person E weighs themselves once per week and compares that one day to the same day of the following week.
- Person F weighs themselves every day for 4 days in a row and compares it to their weight on the 5th day.
- Person G weighs themselves as accurately as possible for 1 week, and then only compares it to how much they weigh during the following week.

I can keep going here, but I think I'd run out of letters. And I think you get the point.

Which is, in all of these scenarios, the person is basing their weight loss progress (or lack thereof) on what the scale is telling them, **while failing to accurately use that scale and/or properly perceive what it's telling them**.

This is why we already learned NOT to weigh ourselves like the fictional people in these examples.

Instead, we know the key to tracking our body weight is 1) weighing ourselves daily (first thing in the morning on an empty stomach, wearing the same amount of clothing each time), 2) taking the average at the end of the week (and only paying attention to that weekly average instead of meaningless daily/hourly fluctuations), and 3) always having at least 2-4 weeks' worth of accurate weekly averages to compare before assuming or worrying that something is wrong (like a plateau has been reached) or that some type of adjustment needs to be made because of it.

Tracking your weight this way eliminates these (and other) false plateau scenarios, and prevents me from getting emails from people who say stuff like "I was losing weight fine on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, but now on Thursday my weight has stalled." Or having conversations where someone tells me their weight loss has stalled, I ask for how long, and they say something like "one week." Nah, it doesn't work like that.

Always wait until you have at least 2-4 weeks' worth of accurate weekly averages to compare before assuming there's a problem or a plateau. Chances are there is neither.

6. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Next up we have another scenario where a person is losing weight but just *thinks* they're not.

However, instead of it being a result of improperly tracking their progress, it's because they have unrealistic expectations for what that progress should be.

Let me give you an example of a conversation I've probably had a dozen times…

Person: I've hit a plateau. I can't lose weight no matter what I do.
Me: How long have things been stalled?
Person: About one month.
Me: So you haven't lost any weight at all in a month?
Person: I lost maybe 3 lbs this month if I'm lucky.
Me: So then you have lost weight?
Person: Well, if you want to get technical about it, then I guess so. But it's only 3 pounds so it just doesn't seem like anything.
Me: First, depending on how much fat you have to lose, 3 lbs lost in a month can actually be considered *great* progress. Second, it shows that you ARE losing weight. And third, can you hear that sound? That's me banging me head against my desk.

See what happened here? **A person makes what would be considered for many people to be solid, realistic progress, and it registers to them as making no progress at all.**

Why? Most often because they assumed they were going to lose 5 lbs per day or 20 lbs every week or have the six pack of their dreams overnight or whatever other unrealistic garbage they've been brainwashed into believing.

And so you end up in a scenario like this, where a person actually *sees* they've lost weight but still comes away complaining that they're stuck at a plateau. Logical? Not at all. But logic tends to go out the window when it comes to weight loss.

7. WEIGHT LOSS PLATEAUS VS FAT LOSS PLATEAUS

Remember the false plateau scenario from a few minutes ago that involved the idea that muscle is being gained quickly and consistently enough to balance out the weight of the fat being lost?

And how this can (supposedly) cause a person's WEIGHT to stay the same for weeks at a time despite the fact that they are losing FAT just fine?

And how it ***doesn't actually happen*** because muscle growth doesn't happen quickly/consistently enough in a deficit (if at all) to equal the rate of fat loss taking placing?

Well, guess what?

This scenario DOES legitimately occur quite often, just not due to gains in muscle. At least, not entirely.

Rather, **it happens mostly due to gains in something else**.

And this goes all the way back to a point we talked about much earlier in this book involving the difference between "weight" and "fat." For the hundredth (maybe thousandth?) time, "fat" is fat. "Weight," however, can be a few different things. Fat, muscle, water, glycogen, poop and food.

The reason I bring this up yet again is because **there's a very big difference between a "weight loss plateau" and a "fat loss plateau."**

You see, since we're tracking our progress primarily via what our total body weight is doing on the scale, it creates the potential for us to be successfully losing body fat at our ideal intended rate WHILE simultaneously gaining some other form of "weight" that counterbalances it and temporarily prevents our fat loss progress from showing up on the scale.

This creates a scenario where a WEIGHT loss plateau is taking place, *but a FAT loss plateau is not*. Instead, fat loss is continuing to happen in the background just like it should be. The number on the scale just isn't showing it yet, thus causing the ultimate form of false plateau.

The scale is just a sneaky bastard that way. So is "weight." Two sneaky bastards.

In fact, this sort of thing can sometimes be significant enough to cause weight *gain* to occur, thus making a person think they've gained fat when in reality they're actually continuing to lose it just fine.

Sneaky, sneaky, sneaky.

So, what can make this happen? A few things…

7A. WATER RETENTION

I've mentioned it quite a few times throughout this book, and now it's finally time to go into some detail about it. Because, above all else, **no other form of "weight" more commonly causes false plateaus than water weight does**.

There are many reasons why people retain water, especially while losing fat. These include:

- **A higher sodium intake than usual.**
  Did you eat more salt than usual? Maybe a bit more typical salty processed food (junk food, fast food, chips, etc.) than you normally do? Or maybe you ate "good" food that just happened to be extra salty (quite common when eating out at a restaurant)? Or maybe you just added more salt to your usual "good" meals than you normally do? Any sort of meaningful increase in sodium intake like this can cause a few pounds of temporary water retention, practically overnight. It will subside soon after your sodium intake returns to normal.

- **A higher carb intake than usual.**
  Did you eat more carbs than you normally do? Maybe you're coming off of a silly low carb diet? Maybe you're using a calorie cycling approach that involves eating more carbs on certain days than on others? Maybe you're doing a refeed? Maybe you're taking a diet break? Maybe you just "messed up" and unintentionally ate more carbs than you were supposed to? Whatever the reason, if your carb intake increases by any meaningful amount one day or over the course of many days, it will often cause a temporary increase in your body weight as a result of water retention (and glycogen… more about that in a minute). Just like with sodium, this water weight will subside soon after your carb intake returns to normal.

- **Insufficient water intake.**
  You know the "starvation mode" myth I talked about before? The idea that eating too little causes your body to hold on to its fat stores and prevent you from losing weight for the purpose of survival? Yeah, it's bullshit. But, ironically enough, it's kinda true when it comes to water intake. Meaning, your body will actually retain water when you consume insufficient amounts of it (as usual, this is for survival purposes). On the other hand, drinking a sufficient amount of water on a daily basis will have the opposite effect and help to prevent and/or reduce water retention.

- **Elevated cortisol levels.**
  Cortisol is the "stress hormone" we talked about earlier. As you may remember, it increases in response to stress. For this reason, it goes up in a deficit because the deficit itself is something your body views as a form of stress (remember, it views your attempt at losing fat as you potentially starving to death… which is an obviously stressful scenario). Why am I mentioning this again now? Because one of the side effects of elevated cortisol levels is water retention. And, the more severe that deficit is in terms of how low your calorie intake is, and/or how excessive your workouts are (e.g., lots of cardio), and/or the longer you've been in a deficit without some type of break (be it a refeed, calorie cycling or a full diet break), the more stressful it is to your body. And the more stressful it is = the higher your cortisol levels will go

= the more water retention you will experience. In addition, other fat loss-specific forms of stress (e.g., freaking out over your diet, freaking out over "messing up," freaking out over false plateaus, etc.) and more typical forms of life stress (e.g., work, school, family, etc.) will have a similar negative effect on water retention.

- **Certain supplements.**
  The most popular water-retention-causing supplement that comes to mind is creatine (more about it later), as it can cause anywhere from 0-5 lbs of water weight gain during its initial month of usage (most likely higher if you do the unnecessary high dose loading phase, lower if you don't, and potentially none whatsoever if you're a non-responder). Although, if you're taking creatine, you typically want and/or don't care that this water retention happens (water is retained in the muscle cells, potentially making those muscles look a tiny bit bigger/fuller/better). So, unlike everything else on this list, it's not exactly *unwanted* water retention.

- **Certain medical conditions and medications.**
  Certain medical conditions and medications are capable of causing edema (the medical term for water retention) as a side effect. Of course, any questions you have or information you seek about this aspect of things should be discussed with your doctor, not me.

- **A woman's menstrual cycle.**
  And finally, we have what is likely to be the most complex cause of water retention of them all… a woman's monthly period. I'm not even going to attempt to cover this topic in a single bullet point, but I will make four very quick points about it. 1) The degree of water retention experienced can vary quite a bit from one woman to the next and even one period to the next. 2) Compared to other common causes of water retention (e.g., increases to sodium/carb intake), water weight gain during a woman's menstrual cycle has the potential to be much more significant (we're talking as much as 10 lbs in some cases) and longer lasting, thus making it even more likely to throw off progress tracking and cause false plateaus. 3) Unlike most of the other causes on this list, this is the only one that's really out of your control and will keep happening every month (or so) whether you like it or not. 4) In terms of the complexity I alluded to a minute ago, I'll just say this. That complexity and the various annoyances it causes (not to mention the further complexity of other female-only factors like birth control, menopause, PCOS and so on), plus the fact that pretty much every aspect of fat loss is worse and harder for women in general (it's not your imagination ladies, it is physiologically tougher for you in virtually every single way, which then makes it

psychologically tougher as well), all makes me very, very happy to be a guy. Seriously. I thank my junk every morning for being so… straightforward. (Pun intended.)

Despite how common and potentially problematic all of the above can be, the key thing to remember is that, in most cases, the water retention will only be temporary.

Sure, **some causes will be a little less temporary than others (e.g., a few days vs a few weeks) and thus worse for the whole "false plateau" thing**. After all, the longer the water retention lasts, the longer a person will see their weight loss progress stall completely on the scale (or potentially even go up) WHILE they are continuing to lose fat just fine.

But, *it's still temporary nonetheless*.

Eventually, a magical "whoosh" finally occurs (aka the water retention subsides) and the scale finally shows a sudden significant amount of weight loss in a short period of time, essentially unveiling the hidden fat loss progress that has been happening all along.

This is a major reason why tracking your body weight in the manner I've described already – only paying attention to weekly averages over the span of at least 2-4 weeks (not 2-4 days, not 1-2 weeks, but 2-4 weeks… *potentially as long as an entire month or more*) before freaking out and adjusting your diet and/or workout – is so important.

Doing so helps us avoid many of the false plateau problems water retention can cause.

You know, like stressing out over nothing (which will only raise cortisol levels and further increase water retention), or *unnecessarily* adding more cardio and/or decreasing calorie intake, which will only make a person's already-present-and-successfully-working deficit (that success is just being temporarily hidden by water retention) larger than it truly needs to be (which will again only raise cortisol levels and worsen water retention).

7B. GLYCOGEN

The carbs we eat are stored as glycogen in our muscles and liver. **For every gram of glycogen being stored, about 3 grams of water are stored along with it.**

What does this mean to us?

Well, for starters, this is why people lose a bunch of weight fairly quickly when starting a low carb diet. They're not losing fat just yet (and they potentially never will… that will always only be a

function of calories, not carbs). Instead, what they're losing is just a combination of water and glycogen.

Hooray, I guess?

The second thing you should know is something I actually mentioned a minute ago and is relevant yet again, which is that eating a large amount of carbs – or, more accurately, *a larger amount of carbs than you usually eat* – will have the opposite effect: **you'll gain weight fairly quickly**.

But again, it's not fat that's being gained.

It's that same combination of water and glycogen due to the increase in carb intake. And the more carbs you eat above the normal amount that you were previously eating, the more temporary weight you'll find yourself gaining in the form of water and glycogen (and the more likely a person will be to see a weight loss plateau (or weight gain) take place while fat loss continues to happen just fine).

But the key word here is, of course, "temporary."

When a low carb dieter's carb intake returns to normal (or really just increases any degree above the "low" amount they were eating), the water and glycogen weight they lost will be regained pretty fast. And when the person who ate an above normal amount of carbs returns to their normal carb intake, they'll quickly lose the water and glycogen weight they gained.

So, if you happen to eat more carbs than you usually do for whatever reason (unintentionally just eating more than you should have, cycling your calorie/carb intake throughout the week, purposely doing a refeed or diet break, etc.), **it's perfectly normal to find yourself gaining weight in the short-term in the form of water and glycogen**.

Just like with water retention, though, the easiest way to prevent this from causing "false plateau" problems is by simply tracking your body weight properly and only paying attention to the weekly averages over a span of at least 2-4 weeks.

7C. POOP ISSUES

In addition to water and glycogen, poop is another form of "weight" that we can gain/lose and confuse with gains/losses of actual fat. Two common ways this happens involves…

- **Constipation.**
  If your poop isn't coming out of you like it ideally should be, that means it's still in you. And since poop weighs something, you can expect your body weight to increase to some extent as a result of this. The good news is that when you fix whatever is causing this constipation (e.g., a lack of fiber in your diet, insufficient water intake, etc.) and return to normal pooping, the weight gain it caused will magically vanish (via a different kind of "whoosh").

- **Over-pooping.**
  Now let's say you pooped a whole lot more than usual one day (fun times, I'm sure) or maybe even over the course of a couple of days (even more fun, no doubt). And then, in the following day(s), you went back to your usual pooping quantity/frequency (congrats). In this scenario, you will weigh more on your normal pooping days in comparison to the day(s) when you over-pooped (and/or the day(s) after). Is it because you suddenly gained body fat? No. You just happen to weigh more on the days when you're not over-pooping compared to the days when you are. (And yes, that's a new word I just made up right now. *Over-pooping*. Feel free to use it as often as you wish around your family and friends. Preferably at the dinner table.)

Yet again, properly weighing yourself/tracking your weight will prevent this sort of thing from creating a false plateau.

7D. WEIGHT OF FOOD

Not only does poop weigh something… but guess what else: **food weighs something, too!**

Which means, if you eat more food today than you typically eat, you will likely weigh a little more tomorrow simply **as a result of having additional food in your stomach waiting to be digested**.

It doesn't even have to be "bad" food. It can be anything, really… *including vegetables*. And you don't even have to go over your intended calorie intake to make this happen.

All it takes is eating a "heavier" amount of food than you usually eat. That's it. It's just the weight of additional food in your body that hasn't been digested yet. The more your food weighs, the more you'll *temporarily* weigh after eating it (but no, it will not be a 1:1 ratio).

As the digestion process begins to take place, this "food weight" will begin to disappear. Again, properly tracking your body weight will prevent this from causing a false plateau.

7E. MUSCLE

Yes, we already talked about muscle in this context (#4 on this list).

However, I'm mentioning it again because, while gains in muscle in a deficit are unlikely to ever be enough by themselves to consistently offset losses in fat, they do have the potential to *contribute* a little to the total amount of "weight" a person (specifically someone in the "beginner" category) can gain in conjunction with other forms of "weight" (e.g., water). And when that's all combined together, it then has the potential to fully balance out the weight of fat being lost and cause a *false* plateau.

Unlike water, glycogen, poop and food, though, muscle gain will ideally be a lot less temporary.

8. SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE SERIOUS

And finally… we have the rarest cause of false plateaus. But don't misunderstand me here. This kind of thing definitely DOES happen. HOWEVER… when the ***vast majority*** of the people who experience a weight loss plateau assume it's a result of "something a little more serious" than the other items on this list… **they are wrong**.

In the ***vast majority*** of cases, it will indeed be something else on this list.

Having said that, **I still need to mention that some people (a MUCH smaller minority) can experience a weight loss plateau as a result of a more serious underlying health issue**.

One common example of this would be something thyroid related. What happens then is that a person's metabolic rate becomes much slower than it should be, thus requiring them to eat much less (and/or burn much more) than they should truly have to in order for a deficit to exist. The solution then isn't to continue eating less/burning more, but rather to get their thyroid condition under control. This is just one possible example of something "slightly more serious." There can be others.

And regardless of how rare this is in comparison to how often it ends up being something else on this list, you should obviously not ignore the possibility. So, if you ever have any reason to suspect that there may be some underlying health/medical issue at play, you should always go to your doctor and get things checked out. It's the only way to know for sure.

Now why is this in the "false plateau" category if it's a real (yet rare) thing? Because, while totally real, it still doesn't fit the description of a *true plateau*. Let me show you what does…

THE CAUSES OF TRUE PLATEAUS

Okay, let's run through a quick checklist. Please follow along with me…

- If your weight loss progress has stopped for 3-4 consecutive weeks or longer…
- And it's not due to any of the false plateau scenarios we just covered…
- Which means this plateau is not a result of known or unknown noncompliance (which are BY FAR the most likely causes)…
- And it's not a result of improperly tracking your body weight or having unrealistic expectations about what should be happening…
- And you're a typical healthy person with no underlying problems (e.g., no thyroid issues), and again, the VAST majority of people will have nothing to worry about at all in this regard (but if you have any sort of concern, always check it out with your doctor)…
- And you have confirmed that it's been a legit 3-4 consecutive weeks or longer (I personally go with 4 weeks or longer myself) that your average weekly body weight has been stalled, because meeting this requirement will *usually* rule out all of those "weight loss plateau vs fat loss plateau" issues caused by water retention, glycogen, poop, muscle, food intake or any combination thereof…
- And if you're a woman, I'd even suggest giving it 4-5 weeks (or longer) to rule out the more significant and longer lasting water retention potentially caused by your menstrual cycle…
- And the measurements you've been taking (e.g., stomach) have also stalled during this time…
- And you've been taking diet breaks at the intervals recommended earlier in this book (which will help to reduce water retention AND lessen/reverse those "metabolic switches" that slow down progress over time and contribute to what ultimately causes a true plateau)…
- And you've done all of this…
- And you can place a check mark next to each relevant bullet point on this list…

Then guess what?

You've reached a *true plateau*.

Congratulations! You have stopped losing body fat for all the right reasons!

Please let me be the first to welcome you to the next phase of your continuing fat loss progress. Take a second to make yourself comfortable and look back at all of the successful progress you've made thus far.

Awesome job! High fives all around! And great job successfully maintaining all of that progress for these last few "stalled" weeks. I have some additional high fives with your name on them.

Seriously, though… good job getting to this point. It's an accomplishment.

Now, you may be wondering why this point has been reached? Or really, *how* this point has been reached? Or, even better, what the hell this point *actually is*?

I mean, sure… it's a "true plateau," but, what the hell does that really mean?

It's pretty simple. **It means that your deficit no longer exists, because you've reached your *new* maintenance level.**

That's it. Nothing scary or mysterious or unexplainable to see here. You've simply arrived at your new maintenance level. That's why fat is no longer being lost and your weight is staying the same.

Now how exactly did that happen, you ask?

It happened because the successful loss of body weight you've already experienced, plus the various metabolic adaptations taking place in response to you being in a deficit, have come together to change the numbers in your personal "calories in vs calories out" equation.

And this has occurred due to a combination of the following five factors:

1. **Your BMR has decreased.**
   As you may remember, your Basal Metabolic Rate is the number of calories your body burns at rest just keeping you alive and functioning. It accounts for the majority of the total number of calories your body burns each day. However, as you lose weight, this number gradually decreases. Why? Because a smaller body burns fewer calories than a bigger body. So, since you've successfully lost fat and now weigh less than you previously did, your BMR has become lower than it originally was.

2. **Your TEA has decreased.**
   The Thermic Effect of Activity, aka the calories your body burns during exercise, has also

become lower. Why? Because again, a smaller body burns fewer calories. Not just at rest, but during exercise, too. So, because you've successfully lost weight, your body is now burning fewer calories during the same form of exercise than it had previously been.

3. **Your NEAT has decreased.**
   Your Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis, aka the calories your body burns during all forms of daily movement besides exercise (which includes subconscious/spontaneous movement you aren't even aware of), has also become lower. Why? Because NEAT goes down in a deficit (and goes up in a surplus) due to various deficit-oriented factors (e.g., lethargy).

4. **Your TEF has decreased.**
   Your Thermic Effect of Food, aka the calories your body burns each day digesting and absorbing the food you eat, has become lower. Why? Because being in a deficit requires eating less food, and less food being eaten = less calories being burned processing food.

5. **Adaptive thermogenesis has occurred.**
   This is the adaptive component of metabolic slowdown. It represents the decrease in your metabolic rate beyond what would be predicted to occur from the loss of body weight alone. While the loss of body weight accounts for the majority of the total drop in your metabolic rate, this adaptive component accounts for a smaller yet still significant part of it. Why does this happen? Because your body is doing everything it can to fight back, conserve energy stores and minimize your deficit as much as possible to keep you alive and prevent you from starving to death.

When you put all of this together over a sufficient amount of time, what ends up happening is that the number on the "calories out" side of the equation (aka how much you're burning) will slowly come closer to matching the number on the "calories in" side (aka how much you're eating).

And when those numbers finally line up… the inevitable *true plateau* will occur.

Basically, the combination of the adaptive component and the fact that you've successfully lost fat (and now weigh less) has made it so that the calorie intake and calorie output that produced a successful fat-loss-causing deficit for you up until this point is no longer doing so. Instead, that calorie intake/output now represents your new maintenance level.

And what are you supposed to do to get fat loss progress happening again when this point is reached? I have a feeling you already know the answer…

HOW TO ADJUST FOR A TRUE PLATEAU

You need to either eat a little less, burn a little more, or do some combination of the two so that a deficit exists once again.

Taaadaaa!

That's really all there is to it.

You're essentially doing the exact same thing you did when you initially created your deficit at the very beginning using whatever your maintenance level was at that time. **Now that you've lost weight and your maintenance level has changed, you just need to create a new deficit from this new maintenance level to make fat loss happen again.**

Simple as that.

Now, whether you should reestablish your deficit by reducing your calorie intake, increasing your calorie output (typically in the form of cardio), or a little of both is mostly dependent on your own personal needs and preferences.

You already know my thoughts on cardio (and metabolic training) and the overall idea of using exercise to burn calories. So, you would be correct in assuming that my preference is *usually* to reduce calorie intake when a true plateau has been reached.

Sure, cardio is definitely an option to consider using at some point for this very purpose. That is, after all, the ideal usage of cardio, in my opinion. However, as mentioned in the cardio chapter of this book, I prefer to hold off on invoking that option until I truly feel like it's needed. Meaning, I'll avoid cardio until I've reached the point where I don't want to reduce my calorie intake any further and would prefer to start increasing calories burned instead.

But hey, that's just me.

Feel free to create your new deficit in whichever way is most preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable for you. In the end, that's what matters most. #PECS

Regardless of which way you choose to do it, though, here's *how* to do it.

HOW TO REESTABLISH THE DEFICIT

1. **Reevaluate what your ideal rate of weight loss should be going forward.**

   As you may remember from earlier, your ideal deficit size is largely based on what your ideal rate of weight loss is. And your ideal rate of weight loss is largely based on how much fat you have to lose and what your current body fat percentage is. The fatter you are and the more you have to lose, the faster that rate can (and arguably *should*) be. But the leaner you are/have become and the less you have left to lose, the slower that rate should ideally be.

   Now that you've reached a point where enough progress has been made for a true plateau to occur, it's a perfect time to take a look at where you're at and how far you still have to go. If you're still within the same category you originally started out in (in terms of whether you have a lot of fat left to lose, a little fat left to lose, or somewhere in between), you can continue to aim for the same rate of weight loss you originally had (unless of course you'd simply prefer to go slower).

   However, if you'd now consider yourself to be in a lower category than you were previously in, and a slower rate of weight loss would now be more ideal for physiological and/or psychological reasons (or simply personal preferences), then aiming for a rate of weight loss that is some degree slower than before would be the right adjustment to make going forward.

   (For the same reason, this would also be a good time to determine if you'd now benefit from more frequent single-day refeeds, using the calorie cycling approach instead of single-day refeeds, and/or more frequent diet breaks.)

2. **Realize your new/current maintenance level.**

   This part is super easy, because no calculators or estimations will be needed. Why? *Because you're already at it right now*. Duh. That is, after all, why progress has stalled. You're at maintenance. So, if you're currently eating the same number of calories each day, that amount is your current daily maintenance level. If you're using the calorie cycling approach instead, you'd just need to add up all 7 days (the 4 deficit days and the 3 maintenance/surplus days) and then divide the total by 7. The number you get is your current daily maintenance level.

3. **Create a deficit of 10%.**

   Regardless of what your intended rate of weight loss is, I want you to reestablish a deficit of 10% below maintenance. So, for example, if your current daily maintenance level is 2500 calories (as usual, that's just a random example), you'd create a deficit of 250 calories. You

can do this by A) eating 2250 calories, B) eating 2500 and then burning those 250 calories via cardio, or C) a little of both. Whichever you prefer. If you choose to eat fewer calories, the reduction should come via carbs and/or fat (just make sure your fat intake never drops below the recommended range we covered earlier).

Why only a 10% deficit? Even when you might be seeking a rate of weight loss that will probably require a larger deficit than that? Because, when it comes to *reestablishing* the deficit, my preference is to take things a little slower and more "wait-and-see" than we did when the initial deficit was first set. Why? Three reasons. 1) To help ensure that false plateau issues aren't sneakily playing some minor role in the background that we still aren't aware of yet (for example, on rare occasions, water retention can last longer than 4 weeks). 2) Because you're getting closer to your goal now and have less fat left to lose, so overshooting the deficit size has more potential to cause problems. 3) Because you always want to ensure that you're eating the most calories you can be eating to still cause your intended rate of weight loss to occur (thus keeping everything as easy and sustainable as it can realistically be). So, starting *slightly* higher than needed and adjusting downward is, in my opinion, a much better idea than starting too low and adjusting upward. And speaking of adjusting…

4. **Rely on "The Key Step" after that.**
   Above all else, **The Key Step is the part that matters most**. This means consistently putting this new 10% deficit into action for the next 2-4 weeks and closely monitoring what happens. Are you losing weight at your ideal rate? Awesome. Keep doing what you're doing. If not, then adjust your calorie intake (or calorie output) up or down in small increments (i.e., 5-10%), give it another 2-4 weeks and closely monitor what happens. Are you losing weight at your ideal rate now? If so, awesome! If not, repeat this again until you are.

And that right there is how you "break through a plateau" (even though there's nothing that needs "breaking through") and get fat loss progress happening again like it should be.

Now to answer the one question that may have popped into your head while reading this…

WHY NOT PREEMPTIVELY ADJUST TO PREVENT THE PLATEAU FROM EVER HAPPENING IN THE FIRST PLACE?

People often ask me if they should adjust their diet every week, or every month, or after every X pounds they lose, or whatever else. Why? To ensure that their intended rate of progress continues smoothly with no stops or stalls or delays of any kind along the way.

But my answer to these kinds of questions is always **no**.

While this seems like a nice idea on paper, the reality is that trying to do this will usually cause more problems than it will supposedly solve.

For starters, we need to again remember that a plateau is NOT this negative thing you need to try to avoid or prevent. It's just a perfectly normal part of the fat loss process that should be expected to happen as result of the successful progress you've already made. Again… it's a mile marker, not a hurdle.

In addition, trying to preemptively adjust in this manner will drive *most* people completely insane. You'll just end up having to constantly make these tiny dietary adjustments that will be nearly impossible to make accurately in the first place and require a level of precision and strictness (bordering on obsession) that will only be detrimental to the success (and mental health) of *most* people.

That's why when it comes to plateaus and adjusting your diet for continued fat loss, my advice is quite simple…

Relax. Expect a plateau to happen at some point (and potentially other points after that, depending on how much fat you need to lose) and don't waste any time or energy stressing yourself out and driving yourself nuts (all of which will raise cortisol levels, lead to extra water retention and screw things up even more) attempting to adjust for it in advance.

Instead, wait until the plateau happens and you have an actual need to adjust.

When that point finally comes and you've confirmed that it is indeed a *true plateau*, pat yourself on the back for a job well done so far, and then adjust accordingly to get fat loss happening again at the ideal rate it should be.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Hmmm, let's see.

How about something people waste more time and money on than probably anything else?

CHAPTER 18

Supplementation

SUPPLEMENTATION

And now for the subject that I personally have the least amount of interest in and, after cardio, probably hate writing about the most: **supplements**.

On second thought, you know what? I *might* even hate writing about supplements more than I hate writing about cardio. It must be my innate hatred of bullshit. Speaking of which…

Here are five things you need to know about supplements before we continue:

1. **95% of all supplements are complete and utter garbage.**
   And that might be an underestimate. The vast majority either have no evidence whatsoever to support them, or they've actually been proven to be useless. Others, in addition to doing nothing positive, have also been shown to cause a variety of negative side effects. And the various companies who sell them and the various people who recommend/endorse them are some of the biggest scumbags on the planet. They regularly do, say and claim whatever the hell they need to in order to get you to buy their useless crap. Really, if you asked me to sum up the supplement industry in one word, it would be *bullshit*. The supposed claims, benefits, reported results, testimonials, before and after pictures… they're all just loaded with bullshit.

2. **No supplements are required for losing fat, building muscle or maintaining muscle.**
   In fact, as long as your diet is what it needs to be, not a single supplement is required for… well… *anything*. You'll be able to lose fat and build/maintain muscle just fine without ever spending a cent on supplements.

3. **Supplements cannot make up for a poor diet or workout program.**
   Despite the hopes and dreams of many lazy people (and the bullshit claims of many supplement companies), there is no such thing as a magic pill or powder that will "do the work for you" or even "do some of the work for you." Nor is there any kind of "you can eat whatever you want as long as you take this" supplement. A proper diet and workout program are *irreplaceable requirements*. If they aren't what they need to be, there aren't enough supplements in the world to help you.

4. **There are no supplements that will directly make you lose fat or build muscle.**
   There are some illegal drugs that can do some impressive things (not a recommendation,

just stating a fact), but in terms of actual legal supplements, there is not a single one that will – in and of itself – actually cause fat loss or muscle growth. Even if it claims it will, it's bullshit.

5. **There are a few proven, safe and effective supplements worth taking.**
   No, they are not required. No, they will not make up for an insufficient diet or workout program. No, they will not do anything major. What they will do, however, is play some small beneficial role in some aspect of the overall process. And we'll take every benefit we can get.

Here now are the few supplements that I personally recommend and use myself because they've been proven to be safe, effective and capable of playing some positive role in our pursuit of superior fat loss…

PROTEIN POWDER

This first one is as self-explanatory as it gets. It's just protein… in powdered form.

What does it do? Nothing, really.

Then why use it? Because, as you learned earlier, a sufficient protein intake is key for maintaining muscle, controlling hunger and maximizing TEF. Which means that your most important dietary goal after creating a caloric deficit is ensuring that you're eating an optimal amount of protein every single day. And that's where protein powder comes in handy.

It's basically just a very high quality, super convenient source of protein. No need to prepare or cook anything. Just throw a scoop in a cup or bottle, mix for a few seconds and drink.

Ideally, you should try to get most of your daily protein intake from high quality food sources like chicken, turkey, beef, eggs and so on (because eating is more filling than drinking), and then feel free to use protein powder as needed to fill in the rest and hit your goal total for the day.

I recommend the following…

- There are many different forms of protein powder (whey, casein, soy, pea, egg, etc.), but whey is definitely my preferred choice in terms of quality and digestibility. As for the various different forms of whey, a whey blend (which is a combination of whey concentrate and whey isolate… which is what most whey protein supplements are these days) is the ideal choice for most

people. If you are lactose intolerant, a pure whey isolate is your best choice. As for hydrolyzed whey, that's only your best choice if you enjoy wasting money on overhyped crap. Details here.

- There is no minimum, maximum or ideal amount of protein powder to use per day. Your goal is to simply consume a sufficient total amount of protein every day. If you need X grams from protein powder to make that happen one day, then consume X grams of it that day. If you need Y grams on some other day, then Y grams is how much you should use. If you meet your protein intake goal through normal foods alone on some other day, then there's no need to use any protein powder whatsoever that day. And if you're able to meet your goal protein intake through normal foods *every day* with no problems of any kind, then there's no need for you to ever buy/use protein powder at all. Details here.
- Regarding the use of protein powder in pre-, during and/or post-workout meals, see the "Nutrient Timing" chapter from earlier. It covers all of this.
- It can be mixed in any liquid you want.
- The calories and macronutrients contained in protein powder count just the same as the calories and macronutrients from any other protein source (as do the calories/macronutrients of whatever liquid you're mixing it in… unless it's water).
- I personally use and fully recommend: Optimum Nutrition's 100% Whey Gold Standard. I've gone through a bunch of different protein powders over the years, but this has been my favorite since at least 2008. All of the flavors I've tried are pretty damn good, so you can't go wrong with any of them, in my opinion. And despite having issues digesting dairy, this whey doesn't give me any problems.

FISH OIL

Remember earlier when I explained the different types of fat and mentioned a particular type of polyunsaturated fat called the omega-3 fatty acid? And more precisely, two specific types of omega-3: eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)?

You might recall that these omega-3 fatty acids may provide some calorie partitioning benefits along with a list of overall health benefits that were too long to even get into.

You may also recall that the ideal ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 consumption is near 1:1 for optimal health and function, but yet is more like 20:1 in most people's diets.

Well, unless you happen to eat a lot of fatty fish (like salmon) on a regular basis, there's a damn good chance your diet is lacking in omega-3.

To solve this problem, you can either start eating a nice amount of fatty fish regularly, or, better yet in my opinion… just take a fish oil supplement.

It is the most abundant, high quality and convenient source there is.

I recommend the following…

- To get the benefits it provides, you want to consume between 1-3 grams of combined EPA and DHA per day. Not grams of fish oil, not grams of fat from fish oil, not total grams of omega-3. You only really want to pay attention to the total combined amount of EPA and DHA the fish oil contains (because they are the ingredients we care about), and take whatever amount provides a combined total of 1-3 g of EPA/DHA each day.
- For the specific brand I recommend below, this would be between 2-5 capsules per day. I personally take 4 (which gives me 2.2 g of combined EPA/DHA). Note that with other brands, it will usually require taking more capsules to reach this amount, as they typically contain less EPA/DHA per capsule than my preferred brand (which is one of the many reasons why I prefer this brand in the first place: less capsules to take per day).
- Always take it with a meal, and feel free to spread them out so you're not taking them all at once (though it probably wouldn't matter much if you did).
- I personally use and recommend Nordic Naturals Ultimate Omega. It's honestly the one and only fish oil I've ever taken in my life. I've gotten both of my parents to use it, too.

For additional details, check out Examine.com's fish oil article. (By the way, Examine.com is the most honest, unbiased, science-based source of supplement information you will ever find.)

VITAMIN D

Vitamin D has become one of the most recommended supplements over the last few years, and with good reason. It has been shown to provide benefits ranging from increased testosterone levels (sources here and here), improved immune function, bone health, mood and more, along with reducing the risk of a variety of diseases.

While there are a few dietary sources of vitamin D, its most abundant source by far is the sun.

Meaning, *actually* being outside… in the sun… with the sun *actually* getting to your skin. So, no sunscreen or long clothing blocking it.

The problem with this is that 1) many people avoid direct exposure to the sun to prevent skin cancer, and 2) most people spend most of the daylight hours indoors at work, in school, or taking part in some other non-outdoor activity (Netflix, video games, etc.).

Which means, unless you happen to be a mailman or a dog walker or something that involves being outside in the sun on a daily basis (including in the winter), there's a very good chance your vitamin D levels are at least lower than optimal… and you may potentially even have a full-blown deficiency (a blood test is the only way to know for sure).

The quickest and easiest way to fix this is by supplementing vitamin D.

I recommend the following…

- The proper vitamin D dosage depends on your specific vitamin D levels. For example, if a blood test shows a legit deficiency, your doctor will probably recommend starting out with a fairly high dosage to get things into their ideal range as quickly as possible, followed by a lower maintenance dose to continue taking from that point on.
- Now, what if there is no deficiency but it's still on the lower end of the normal range? Something that's just… suboptimal? Or, what if you don't have any insurance/money to get a blood test done to find out for sure? Or, what if you just don't get much (if any) direct sun exposure and assume you'd probably benefit from supplementing some sane amount of vitamin D? In these cases, a daily dose of 2000-3000 IU of vitamin D tends to be the sweet spot for most people. That's the amount I've personally been taking since around 2010.
- Vitamin D3 is the ideal form of it.
- Always take it with a meal, and make sure it's a meal that contains at least a small amount of fat (because it's a fat-soluble vitamin).
- Try to take it at some point during the first half of the day, as some people report that taking it at night may disrupt sleep (though I've never noticed this myself).
- I personally use and recommend NOW Foods Vitamin D3. This is the only Vitamin D supplement I've ever taken.

For additional details, check out Examine.com's vitamin D article.

CREATINE

At this point, I feel pretty comfortable referring to creatine as the most proven muscle building supplement there is.

Although calling it a "muscle building supplement" isn't completely accurate because, as mentioned before, no supplement will directly build muscle.

What creatine will directly do is improve your strength and performance by essentially giving your muscles more energy. No, you won't suddenly be able to lift 20 lbs more on every exercise. The effects aren't that significant. You will, however, be able to get a few additional reps in many of your sets. And while this seems fairly minor (and it is), it will still have a meaningful positive effect on your ability to build and maintain muscle.

And considering that strength and performance are reduced in a deficit – *contributing to problems with muscle loss* – creatine becomes just as useful (if not more so) when fat loss is the primary goal as it is when muscle growth is the primary goal.

Another positive is that creatine has been shown to be extremely safe. The only potential "side effects" are mild – stomach discomfort and cramps – and can easily be prevented by drinking a sufficient amount of water each day, taking the proper dosage, and using a higher quality micronized version of it (which just means it will mix and digest easier).

I recommend the following…

- Use a plain creatine monohydrate powder. No other form has been shown to be any better despite being significantly more expensive.
- Take 3-5 grams per day, every day. Don't load it. Don't cycle it.
- The time of day you take it doesn't really matter. On training days, I take it post-workout just because it's easy to remember. On rest days, I take it with my first meal just so I don't forget to take it later.
- Take it with a meal. And feel free to mix it in any liquid you want. I prefer water.
- Use a micronized version.

- I personally use and fully recommend Optimum Nutrition's Creatine Powder. This is literally the only creatine I've ever used. I've taken 3-5 g of it every single day since somewhere around 2006.

If you have any other questions about creatine, my *absolutely amazing* guide to taking it is the perfect place to look: The Ultimate Guide To Taking Creatine.

Examine.com's creatine article is another. Mine is way better, though. ;)

VITAMINS/MINERALS YOUR DIET IS LACKING

As I explained earlier, a nice side effect of the dietary guidelines in *Superior Fat Loss* (i.e., eating a balanced diet with no excessive and unnecessary restrictions, comprised largely of higher quality foods with an added emphasis on fruit and vegetable consumption) is that they often automatically allow us to get a sufficient amount of various micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, etc.) without having to purposely try to make it happen.

To be extra safe and ensure that nothing is missed along the way, many people (including myself) like to take a very basic multivitamin to serve almost as a form of nutritional insurance on top of an already well-designed diet and provide some additional peace of mind that no deficiencies are present.

While this is purely optional, it tends to be an especially good idea during periods of fat loss, because the required deficit and the slightly reduced food intake needed for that deficit to exist increase the potential for nutrient deficiencies. Taking a basic (non-mega-dosing) multivitamin can serve as a nice back-up plan.

More important, however, is that due to certain personal dietary needs and preferences, some people may end up with a diet that is low in certain micronutrients and may therefore require *individual supplementation*.

Take me, for example. I completely avoid all forms of dairy because I don't digest it well. This means my diet is almost always low in calcium. So, I take a calcium supplement to compensate.

If there are any similar examples like this within your own diet (and a blood test would be ideal for confirming it), supplementing the specific micronutrients that are lacking would be a very good idea.

If there are no examples like this in your diet (and a blood test shows everything is within the range it should be in), you're all good. No need for any individual supplementation like this.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

There are two other supplements I want to mention as being potentially beneficial for fat loss and/or muscle growth, but I'm not really going to go into any detail about them.

Why? Because… A) I don't personally take them myself (no special reason why, just my own needs and preferences) and B) I hate writing about supplements and will gladly use "A" as an excuse to get out of having to do it.

The two supplements I'm referring to are:

- Caffeine
- Beta-alanine

Both have some proven benefits (especially caffeine, for its use as a pre-workout stimulant) and may be worth taking.

For additional details, check out Examine.com's caffeine article and their beta-alanine article. They cover everything you need to know.

BUT WHAT ABOUT OTHER SUPPLEMENTS?

That's it. Those are the only supplements I personally take or would recommend that you take.

However, there's a good chance that there is some other supplement out there that you are currently taking, considering taking, or will eventually have marketed down your throat in the hopes that you then start taking… and you probably have/will have a million questions about it.

Well, the short answer is that if it's a supplement I haven't mentioned in this chapter, the odds are pretty high that it's total shit and you'd be best served to pretend it doesn't exist.

The short answer is that if it's a supplement I haven't mentioned in this chapter, the odds are pretty high that it's total shit and you'd be best served to pretend it doesn't exist.

For a much better, more detailed answer, I'd recommend checking out Examine.com's Supplement-Goals Reference Guide and/or their supplement Stack Guides.

I have both, and I can tell you that they'll provide the research-backed answer to every supplement question you will ever have.

And with that all covered, I think it's time we talk about the birds and the bees…

CHAPTER 19

Lifestyle Factors: Sleep, Stress, Sex And Alcohol

LIFESTYLE FACTORS: SLEEP, STRESS, SEX AND ALCOHOL

At this point, we've covered virtually every meaningful aspect of our diet, training, and supplementation, and we've adjusted all of it toward getting superior fat loss results.

Nice!

But we're not quite done yet.

There are a few additional factors that are capable of affecting our results, and they don't exist in the gym or the kitchen. Rather, they are factors of our **lifestyle**.

I'm talking about:

1. Sleep
2. Stress
3. Sex
4. Alcohol Consumption

Let's take a quick look at each…

SLEEP

First, the obvious… *sleep is good*. We should get a sufficient amount of it every single night. It's crucial to our overall health and function.

Now for the slightly less obvious… **what role does it play in fat loss?**

Well, studies and anecdotal evidence have shown that insufficient sleep often comes with the following negative effects:

- Increased hunger. (Sleep deprivation is widely associated with weight gain because it decreases leptin and increases ghrelin (aka the hormones that regulate hunger), thus making you hungrier and more likely to overeat.)

- Lower testosterone levels. (The muscle building hormone.)
- Higher cortisol levels. (The stress hormone.)
- Impaired calorie partitioning. (You end up losing more muscle and less fat.)
- Reduced strength and performance. (Which negatively impacts your ability to build or maintain muscle.)
- Impaired recovery. (Same as above.)
- Decreased NEAT. (Being tired makes you move around less, thus causing you to burn less calories than you normally do.)
- Increased lethargy/laziness. (Not only does this reduce non-exercise activity and the calories it burns, but it also makes a person more likely to miss actual workouts.)
- Reduced insulin sensitivity.
- Impaired cognitive function.
- And more.

So what does this all mean to us? **It means that sleep has the potential to play a major role in your ability to lose fat, as well as your ability to build or maintain muscle while losing that fat.**

Among many other things.

Fortunately, this can all be minimized/prevented by simply ensuring that you get a sufficient amount of sleep each night. The only question is: what constitutes a "sufficient amount of sleep"?

Based on everything I've seen, **my guess is that the ideal amount of sleep for an adult is somewhere in the range of 7-9 hours per night**.

My advice would be to experiment within that range and see what suits you best.

And if you happen to be someone who has trouble falling asleep or sleeping well through the night, I'd recommend checking out my article on How To Sleep Better.

STRESS

Stress is bad. ("And the award for the most obvious statement in the book goes to…")

I think we're all pretty familiar with the fact that stress has the potential to be terrible for our overall health and well-being. In terms of fat loss, it's also only going to be the cause of detrimental things (most of what you see on the list of negative effects associated with insufficient sleep apply here just the same… plus the addition of excessive water retention and the various problems caused by "stress eating").

So, what do I mean by "stress" exactly? Well, it comes in a variety of forms.

- There's the common generic life stress you're probably already thinking of… typical issues with your job, school work, family, friends, husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend, social life and whatever other normal day-to-day obviously stress-inducing problems people experience.
- Then there's a fat-loss-specific subcategory of this type of stress that involves things like freaking out over normal meaningless fluctuations in your body weight, freaking out over "messing up," freaking out over false plateaus, obsessing about your diet/workout, and whatever else people commonly and unnecessarily drive themselves nuts about in the context of fat loss… all of which *Superior Fat Loss* is designed to help you avoid.
- Then there's more personal forms of stress that are specific to each person and whatever craziness happens to be going on in their head at any given time (e.g., anxiety, depression, etc.).
- Then there's physical stress, which can include all sorts of things. For example, insufficient sleep, excessive amounts of exercise (e.g., tons of cardio), an excessive caloric deficit (in terms of size, duration, or both), digestive issues (it's more than just problems with bloating, poop and farts… it's a real form of stress being put on your body). And more.

So, what are you supposed to do about all this stress?

Simple. *Avoid it*.

Taaadaaa!

Wait, what's that you say? It's impossible to avoid stress?

Oh. Hmmm.

Well, physical stress is probably the easiest to come close to avoiding. For example, avoid large deficits, avoid being in a deficit for too long without some type of break, avoid doing too much exercise, sleep 7-9 hours a night, avoid foods you have issues digesting, etc.

As for mental and emotional stress… yeah… that's *a little* bit harder.

It's also a little bit harder for me to give any recommendations for that sort of thing when it's outside of the context of fat loss. (You hate your job? Quit! Your boss is a dick? Punch him/her in the face! School is boring? Drop out! Your girlfriend/boyfriend/wife/husband sucks to be around? Leave them!)

So, the only recommendation I can give here is a general commonsense one: **find ways to at least *minimize* whatever mental/emotional stress you have in your life, and/or find better ways of dealing with that stress**.

For example…

- Do more of the things you enjoy doing, and less of the things you don't.
- Spend more time around people you like being around, and less around people you don't.
- Laugh more.
- Play more.
- Meditate.
- Read.
- Listen to music.
- Take a walk outside.
- Find some other relaxing hobby.
- Have more sex – it's a *proven* stress reliever AND sleep aid – and ideally have that sex with another person rather than just by yourself, as that has been shown to be more beneficial in this regard.

Whatever it is, anything you can do in your life to reduce stress will benefit your fat loss results. And pretty much every other aspect of your life, too.

SEX

I'm going to keep this one short and sweet (insert your own joke here).

Sex is good. Feel free to have as much of it as you want. Every sex-related study I've ever seen shows only positive effects. Several positive effects, actually. For both men and women.

In fact, as I mentioned a minute ago, sex also helps reduce stress and produces a nice relaxed feeling that is ideal for falling asleep.

AND… it burns calories! (It's my preferred form of cardio.)

AND… *it's really fun!* Seriously. I highly recommend it.

And if you don't have someone to have that sex with, there's still some good news. Masturbation sorta has similar effects, though possibly to a lesser degree.

I only bring this up because I seem to get about one email a week from some guy who is concerned that his masturbation frequency may be lowering his testosterone levels or in some way interfering with his ability to build muscle, lose fat or whatever else.

The answer, however, is no. It's fine. Knock yourself out.

And for anyone wondering, in the decade or so that I've been getting this question from guys, I literally haven't heard it once from a woman. I'm still holding out hope it happens one day, if for no other reason than to help balance out the creepiness factor of having random dudes tell me how often they're jackin' it.

ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

And last but not least, we have alcohol. While technically a dietary factor, I think we can all agree it fits better in the "lifestyle" category.

So, what do we need to know?

Strictly in terms of fat loss (or muscle growth, for that matter), there's really nothing positive to report. **The effects of alcohol are either going to be harmless or negative… *not positive*.**

In what ways can it be negative, exactly?

Well, for starters, it's *liquid calories*. As we learned earlier, there is really no easier way to overconsume calories than by drinking them (which is why water is the ideal drink of choice). Which means alcohol – similar to soda or any other calorie-containing beverage – has the potential to easily take you out of your deficit and *prevent* fat loss, as well as put you over your maintenance level and *cause* fat gain.

In addition, studies show that excessive alcohol consumption is associated with a variety of things we don't want, including reduced testosterone levels.

Plus, in case it's not obvious enough, doing *large amounts* of drinking today is very likely to have a significant negative effect on your training performance tomorrow. Or, it may just prevent you from actually training in the first place.

But, none of this means that alcohol needs to be avoided completely. *It doesn't*. Just like anything else typically deemed "bad," an intelligent use of moderation will help prevent the negatives and shift things into the "harmless" category.

Specifically, **small to moderate amounts of alcohol consumption** (i.e., the kind of drinking that you *don't* feel the next day) **on an infrequent basis** (let's say once or maybe twice a week at most) are usually okay for most people (some, however, will be best served to avoid it completely for the same reasons they'd be best served to avoid any other form of liquid calories).

That would be the maximum amount I'd recommend, though.

And if you choose to do any drinking, **always be sure to count those alcohol calories just the same as you would with anything else, and make it a part of your ideal calorie intake that day rather than something that puts you over your intended total**.

Cool? Cool.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Oh, I know!

How about the #1 reason why most of the people who attempt to lose fat will end up failing?

CHAPTER 20

Motivation, Mindset, Habits, Discipline And Accountability

▶ MOTIVATION, MINDSET, HABITS, DISCIPLINE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Do you know why most people fail to successfully reach their fat loss goals? Or permanently maintain them afterward?

As you can imagine, a lot of the time, it's a dietary problem. Other times, it's a workout problem. And many times, it's just a fundamental lack of understanding of what needs to be done within that diet and/or workout in the first place.

Yes, I know, this is all pretty obvious. And it's stuff we've already covered.

But do you know what's interesting?

The fact that none of this is the BIGGEST reason why most people fail.

Nope, that title goes to another factor. A factor that is much less sexy and exciting than these diet and workout factors are. A factor that people pay little to no attention to until it becomes the sole reason why they are failing to lose fat or keep it off after they lose it.

And that is a factor that can best be summed up as **the mental aspect of losing fat**.

What do I mean by "mental aspect," exactly?

I mean things like **motivation**. And **mindset**. And **habits**. And **discipline**. And **accountability**.

I'm talking about every aspect of fat loss that is largely-if-not-entirely psychological in nature.

Because while your diet and workout are the factors that dictate whether or not you reach your fat loss goals (and just how well you do it), the factors encompassed within this mental aspect are what will dictate whether or not that diet and workout *actually* get put into action on the consistent long-term basis REQUIRED for progress to be made and permanently maintained.

Or, to put that another (slightly-more-blunt) way, *the best diet and workout in the world won't mean shit without long-term consistency*.

And, as most people eventually discover, much of what makes that long-term consistency happen (or not happen) falls within the realm of the mental aspect of losing fat.

So, I guess the obvious question is this: **how do you succeed in dealing with this crucial mental aspect?**

That's a good question, and I'm excited to report that I have a great answer for you.

OPEN THAT SECOND FILE: "THE MENTAL ASPECT OF LOSING FAT"

When you purchased *Superior Fat Loss*, you downloaded two files. The first is the one you're reading right now… aka the main book… aka *Superior Fat Loss*.

The second file is the companion book that came along with it.

It's called: ***The Mental Aspect Of Losing Fat***

And it clearly and effectively covers crucial factors like motivation, mindset, habits, discipline, accountability and more in a way that will put you in the best position you've ever been in for finally understanding and successfully dealing with the mental aspect of losing fat.

All you need to do to access all of this is open that second file…

The file is named: The-Mental-Aspect-Of-Losing-Fat.pdf

No need to do it right now, though. We still have one final thing to cover here first…

CHAPTER 21

The Next Step: What To Do After Reaching Your Fat Loss Goal

▶ THE NEXT STEP: WHAT TO DO AFTER REACHING YOUR FAT LOSS GOAL

I want you to close your eyes and imagine something for me. Wait… hang on… you'll need to keep your eyes open long enough to read this first. Once you've read it, I want you to *then* close your eyes and imagine it. Okay? Ready?

I want you to imagine that… ***you did it***.

You lost whatever amount of fat you wanted to lose.

You got as lean as you wanted to get.

You made it to your ideal body fat percentage.

You successfully reached your fat loss goal.

Go ahead, close your eyes and imagine it.

Feels pretty good, huh? You know what's even better? When it's real and not something you're just imagining. I can tell you from experience, it's a fantastic feeling.

I can also tell you that as long as you follow what has been laid out in this book (and that second companion book we just talked about), you will get there. You will *definitely* reach that point.

And that brings us to an interesting question: **what the hell are you supposed to do *after* reaching that point?**

Well, the exact answer to that question will depend on a few things specific to you. However, regardless of any of that, the first step is always going to be the same.

And that is, **you need to end the deficit and return to maintenance**.

Here's how to do it…

ENDING THE DEFICIT AND RETURNING TO MAINTENANCE

Once your fat loss goal has been reached, the first thing you need to do is come up out of the deficit and return to your maintenance level.

Why? So you stop losing fat.

Also, so you don't go too high and regain any fat.

Going to your maintenance level is the calorie-intake sweet spot that will meet both of these needs. The only question is, how do you do that?

Like this…

STEP 1: IGNORE YOUR PREVIOUS MAINTENANCE LEVEL

The first step is to forget about any maintenance level you previously had/calculated. That maintenance level was only relevant to you at that specific time and at that specific body weight.

But now that you've lost fat (and potentially built some muscle) and therefore weigh less, you now have a brand new maintenance level that is only relevant to your current state at the current time.

You simply need to figure out what that is and increase your calorie intake to that level. Here's how…

STEP 2: IGNORE CALCULATORS

If you were thinking of going back to the maintenance level calculator from earlier or using any similar method for estimating your maintenance level now… *don't*. That sort of thing is no longer needed.

You see, the reason why this was important when you originally calculated your maintenance level was because, at that point, you had no other starting point to go from.

But now? *You totally do*.

Now you've been tracking your diet and consistently eating a certain number of calories per day. You've also been tracking your body weight during this time, so you know exactly what has been happening as a result of this calorie intake.

Which means, **you already have the starting point you need**.

It's just going to be a matter of adjusting from here until you find your new maintenance level.

STEP 3: DETERMINE YOUR CURRENT DAILY CALORIE INTAKE

This step is easy as hell.

If you're currently eating the same number of calories per day, *that number* is your current daily calorie intake. (Told you it was easy.)

However, if you've been using the calorie cycling approach, you have one additional (still easy) step to do. And that is, add up all 7 days (the 4 deficit days and the 3 maintenance/surplus days) and then divide the total by 7. The number you get is your (average) current daily calorie intake.

Also, if you've been using the calorie cycling approach, you will stop using it (for now, at least) and start eating the same number of calories each day. Once your new maintenance level has been found, you'll be able to return to calorie cycling if you'd like to (more about that later).

STEP 4: DETERMINE WHAT YOUR BODY WEIGHT IS CURRENTLY DOING

Now you need to figure out what your body weight has been doing over the last few weeks. So, look at your weekly averages over the last few weeks.

Take note of how much weight you appear to have lost over the last 3-4 weeks especially. Maybe 1 lb per week? Maybe 0.5 lb? Maybe more? Maybe less? Whatever it is, just take note of your current rate of weight loss.

STEP 5: INCREASE YOUR CALORIE INTAKE

Now it's just a simple matter of increasing your calorie intake from where it currently is and then seeing what happens. A little maintenance level trial and error, you could say.

How much should you increase your calorie intake by? That would depend on how much weight you've been losing. Here's what I recommend…

Add back about 200 calories for every 0.5 lb you're currently losing per week.

So, for example, if you've been consistently losing about 0.5 lb per week for the last few weeks, you'd start eating 200 additional calories per day. (For example, if your current daily calorie intake (or *average* daily calorie intake) is 2000 calories, you'd now start eating 2200 calories per day.)

If you've been consistently losing about 1 lb per week for the last few weeks, you'd now start eating 400 additional calories per day.

If you've been consistently losing about 1.5 lbs per week for the last few weeks, you'd now start eating 600 additional calories per day.

Make sense? Cool.

Now let's answer two common questions people often have about this step…

1. WHERE SHOULD THESE NEW CALORIES COME FROM?

The additional calories you're adding back to your daily diet should come from **carbs primarily**, and **fat secondarily**. Protein intake should remain about the same. Let your personal preferences dictate the specifics.

2. HOW QUICKLY SHOULD THESE CALORIES BE ADDED BACK? AND WHAT ABOUT REVERSE DIETING?

How quickly should the calories be added back? Uh… how does by tomorrow sound?

What about reverse dieting? No thanks.

In case you're unfamiliar with the term, "reverse dieting" in its typical form (which is the form I'm specifically talking about here) involves very, very, VERY slowly increasing your calories back up to maintenance. We're talking something like 25-50 calories being added back in *per week*. So, for someone who needs to add back 500 calories to get to their maintenance level, it would take them 10-20 weeks to get there. Which is COMPLETELY insane, unnecessary and counterproductive.

There's simply no good reason to delay the process of going from a deficit back up to maintenance. Especially to this bat-shit crazy degree.

There are however PLENTY of great reasons to end the deficit and get back up to maintenance ***as-soon-as-effing-possible***.

Remember all of those hormonal and metabolic switches from earlier? All of the ways the body is fighting back? All of the things that suck physically and mentally about being in a deficit?

Well, **we want to end all of that as soon as we possibly can *and start reversing it***… and we need to get back to our maintenance level in order for that to happen.

So, why on earth would you want to delay this and draw it out to the point where it potentially takes *months* to get back to your maintenance level? Thus keeping you in a deficit longer than you need or want to be? Thus adding to your physiological and psychological stress and continuing/worsening everything that sucks about being in a deficit? All while you continue to lose additional weight that you don't actually want to be losing?

These are all rhetorical questions. The only good answer to them is "uh, *I don't*."

That's why I'm not a fan of anything resembling this form of "reverse dieting." It's not logically sound, nor is any aspect of it (or supposed reason for doing it) supported by evidence.

So no, **I don't recommend it**. And many of the most well-respected people in this field – from Alan Aragon (source: the February/March issue of AARR), to Lyle McDonald (source: this and the 7:12 mark of this video), to Eric Helms (source: here and here) – feel the same way.

Instead, I recommend adding back the full number of calories that will put you at (or at least, close to) your new maintenance level as soon as *tomorrow*.

The only reason I can think of for being any more gradual about it than that would be if a person lacked the self-control needed to add back this full number of calories at one time without going overboard and adding back more than they should or just flat out bingeing. In cases like this, adding a little back at a time (50-100 calories every few days or whatever) and taking maybe 1-2 weeks to fully add it all back may be something to consider doing.

Otherwise, for the vast majority of the population who won't have any problems like this, you can feel free to add back the full amount starting tomorrow.

STEP 6: THE KEY STEP

Now it's time for the most important step of all: **The Key Step**.

That means consistently putting this new slightly higher calorie intake into effect for the next 2-4 weeks while closely monitoring what happens (i.e., weighing yourself daily and only paying attention to the weekly averages). And then, if needed… adjusting accordingly.

As usual, remember that whenever you eat more calories (especially in the form of carbs) than you've previously been eating, your weight will increase pretty quickly due to a combination of water, replenished muscle glycogen stores and increased stomach content. As always, this is nothing to worry about at all. It's completely normal, and it's NOT fat being regained. It's just something to expect to see happen during that first week or two and NOT freak out about.

Instead, what you want to do is pay extra close attention to what your weight does during the third and fourth weeks of consuming this new calorie intake.

Is your weight staying about the same? If so, awesome! You've most likely found your new maintenance level! Just to be sure, continue eating this amount of calories each day for an additional 1-2 weeks and confirm that your weight is indeed staying about the same (and to allow things to further stabilize). If it is, you win! Your new maintenance level has been found.

If, however, you find that you're still losing weight or possibly even gaining weight in weeks 3-4 (and beyond), you just need to adjust your new calorie intake up or down in some small increment (e.g., 100-300 calories), give it another 2-4 weeks and closely monitor what happens. Is your weight staying about the same now? If so, awesome! Give it another 1-2 weeks to confirm it. If not, repeat this again until it is.

NOW WHAT?

Now the deficit is over, fat loss is done, and you're officially at your (new) maintenance level.

What should you do next?

Well, that depends on you and what your specific goals and preferences are going forward.

For all I know, you might want to run a marathon; do a figure, physique, or bodybuilding show; compete in a powerlifting competition; or attempt any of the countless other goals a person might be interested in at this point (getting super laid?).

Hell, you might not want to do anything at all other than feel good about the progress you've made and enjoy it.

That's perfectly fine.

So, rather than attempting to cover every possible option, I've decided to focus entirely on what's most likely to be the two most common goals a person will have upon reaching their fat loss goal.

They are:

1. **Long-Term Maintenance**
2. **Building Muscle**

Let's start with #1…

LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE

Perhaps the most obvious and common goal a person will have after reaching their fat loss goal is to *permanently maintain* all of the progress they've made and avoid ever regaining any of the fat they just lost.

The question is… how do you do this?

Well, I hope you're sitting down, because the answer is *extremely complicated*: **you stay at your maintenance level from this point on**.

Yup, *that's it*. The only thing that will EVER cause you to gain/regain body fat now or at any point in the future is exceeding your maintenance level (i.e., creating a caloric surplus) on a consistent basis. So, if you want to maintain your results and prevent this scenario from ever happening, all you need to do is remain at your maintenance level. There are two ways this can be accomplished:

1. The simplest way would be by eating the same number of maintenance calories every single day. So, for example, if your current maintenance level is 2500 calories (as always, that's just a random example), you'd simply eat 2500 calories each day from this point on.

2. Or, if you happen to prefer the calorie cycling approach, you could eat a little less (a small deficit) on certain days and a little more (a small surplus) on others so that you still end up breaking even at your maintenance level for the week. As an added bonus, you *might* even make some very minor positive changes to your body composition (slightly more muscle, slightly less fat) over time.

So, which way should you do it? **Whichever way is more preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable for you.** #PECS

(*Note: Keep in mind that your maintenance level at this point will change if any aspect of your activity level changes in the future. For example, if you do a lot of walking every day, or have a more physical type of job, or play a sport, or whatever else you might regularly do that causes you to burn a certain number of calories, and that aspect of your life changes at some point in the future (e.g., you start doing less walking, you get a less physical job, etc.), then you will end up burning fewer calories than you currently are. Which means, you'll need to adjust by eating a little less or burning a little more via exercise to make up for it and remain at whatever your new maintenance level ends up being if this hypothetical point ever happens.)*

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOUR DIET?

That's just as easy: **Your macronutrient intake (protein, fat and carbs), micronutrient intake, fiber intake and water intake should stay about the same**.

Sure, you can adjust a bit within the recommended ranges we covered earlier if doing so better suits your personal preferences now. But, for the most part, nothing really changes much when switching from a fat loss diet to a maintenance diet other than switching from being in a caloric deficit to being at maintenance.

Why? Because the same dietary guidelines and recommendations that were ideal for you while getting superior fat loss results (in terms of body composition, overall health, and making things as preferable, enjoyable, convenient and sustainable for you as possible) are still going to be ideal for you while permanently maintaining those results.

This also includes the guidelines and recommendations for **supplements**, **pre- and post-workout nutrition**, **meal frequency**, **eating style**, **food choices** and **diet organization**. Plus, all of the advice for **tracking your diet** and **sustaining your diet in the real world**. It all still applies.

(*Note: Refeeds and diet breaks will no longer be needed because you're no longer in a deficit.)*

WHAT ABOUT EXERCISE?

Well, **weight training** will still be required, assuming that you'd like to maintain the muscle and strength you currently have (or you'd like to gain more of it).

As for **cardio**, that depends on how you were using it up until this point, or if you were even using it at all. For example, if you weren't doing any cardio to reach this point, then guess what? You can continue doing no cardio.

However, if cardio was being used to get you to this point, you will either need to continue using it in a similar manner or, if preferred, do less of it (or none at all) and eat a little less to compensate. As usual, this is totally up to you and your own personal needs and preferences.

WHAT ABOUT THE KEY STEP?

In addition to all of the above, **The Key Step** will continue to remain *the key step*.

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Meaning, from this point on, you should continue to weigh yourself regularly and keep track of what happens. If your weight is staying the same (or within 2-4 lbs of the weight you want to maintain), you'll know you're successfully maintaining your results. Nice job.

If, however, you start to see things moving in the wrong direction at any point (which, again, is a scenario that is only caused by a consistent caloric surplus, typically due to known or unknown noncompliance), you'll know it's time to adjust accordingly to prevent any sort of significant fat gain from taking place.

And… that's… pretty… much… it.

BUT WAIT… YOU MAKE IT SOUND SO SIMPLE. WHY DO MOST PEOPLE END UP REGAINING FAT IF IT'S TRULY THIS SIMPLE?

Ah, great question, and it has a very easy answer.

The #1 reason why so many of the people who successfully lose fat end up regaining some, all or even *more* than all of it, is because they lose it in a manner that isn't conducive to long-term maintenance.

You see, many of the people who lose fat do so by using a diet/workout that involves some or all of the following characteristics:

- Quick fixes.
- Silly gimmicks.
- Stupid fads.
- Bullshit products.
- Unproven/disproven nonsense.
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Unnecessary rules.
- Excessive restrictions.
- Annoying approaches.

- Unhealthy methods.
- Indirect deficits.
- Excessively large deficits.
- Very low calorie intakes.
- Excessive amounts of exercise.
- Doing things without learning or understanding the reasoning behind it or the purpose for it.
- Doing things that lack any legitimate reasoning or purpose at all.
- Being forced to eat in a manner that goes against your personal dietary needs and preferences.
- Being forced to exercise in a manner that goes against your personal needs and preferences.
- Being forced to do things that just aren't as preferable, enjoyable, convenient or sustainable for you as they could/should be.

In most cases, it's stuff like this that causes people to fail to reach their fat loss goal in the first place. In other cases, however, they can sometimes manage to make it work just long enough to successfully get to that end point.

But after that?

When it's time to switch from *getting* results to *permanently maintaining* those results?

Not so much.

Why is this? Three reasons come to mind…

1. **Sometimes it's because a person who loses fat under these conditions will feel so tortured and/or deprived by the end that the breaking point they've been able to suppress this entire time finally comes out.** And when that happens, self-control goes out the window and overeating (or binge-eating) themselves right back to where they started becomes a strong possibility.
2. **Other times it's because fat was lost in a manner that was never meant to be the person's new long-term lifestyle.** So, when it comes time to maintain their results for the rest of their

life, the person is completely unprepared for it. They were able to get this far using some unsustainable approach that was only intended for short-term usage, and they're now left completely uninformed and/or misinformed about what needs to be done to permanently maintain it. They never made the necessary lifestyle changes, or formed the necessary new habits, or learned the necessary information, or developed the necessary skills and mindset. They're essentially right back in the same position they were in when they started, just at a lower body weight. And what will usually happen at that point is a lateral jump to some other unsustainable short-term thing that also fails to solve their long-term maintenance problems, followed by some other unsustainable short-term thing, followed by some other unsustainable short-term thing, and then eventually followed by a reversion back to the original habits and lifestyle that caused them to be overweight to begin with.

3. **And when it's neither of these scenarios, what usually happens is that the person will eventually come to realize that they simply can't keep it up any longer.** The diet, the workout, the rules, the restrictions, the extremes, the excessiveness, the unnecessary aspects, the things that went against their preferences and were all *intended* for long-term usage and *intended* to be their new diet and exercise lifestyle during whatever number of months it took to reach their goal… **they simply cannot sustain it for the years/decades it will take to permanently maintain it**.

And so… *they don't*. This is why most people regain fat after losing it.

The question is, then… how do you avoid all of this?

The answer is pretty simple. And you know what the best part is? *We've already taken care of it*.

You avoid all of this by avoiding all of the unnecessary, excessive, unsustainable stuff *from the very beginning*, and always approach fat loss in the manner that is as *preferable*, *enjoyable*, *convenient* and *sustainable* for you in both the short-term and long-term as realistically possible.

Not only will this *greatly* increase the potential of you successfully losing fat in the first place, it will also *greatly* increase the potential of that fat loss remaining permanent.

And that – from top to bottom – is *exactly* what *Superior Fat Loss* has shown you how to do.

All you need to do is do it.

Now about that other common goal…

BUILDING MUSCLE

The next most common goal a person will have after reaching their fat loss goal is to **build muscle**.

As I explained earlier, muscle is the key difference maker between losing fat and just looking skinny, thin, and "skinny-fat"… and losing fat and looking lean, fit, toned, defined, muscular, strong, athletic and various other adjectives most people would love to be described as.

The only question is… how do you build it?

And I'm not talking about building muscle as the secondary goal it has been during the fat loss process for the handful of people who were actually capable of making it happen in a deficit (which would mostly be people in the "beginner" category).

And I'm definitely not talking about building muscle as the borderline impossible goal it has been for everyone else (intermediate/advanced trainees) who needed to switch their focus during this time from building muscle to maintaining muscle due to the fact that they'd simply be unable to build any meaningful amount of it while in a deficit .

No, see, I'm talking about building muscle when it's your *primary goal* and *main focus*.

I'm talking about building muscle as quickly and effectively as realistically possible, and doing so WITHOUT gaining excess body fat along the way.

Well, I have some good news and some bad news about that.

The bad news is that laying out the guidelines and recommendations for making that happen would honestly require an entire book of its own.

The good news, however, *is that I've already written it*.

It's called *Superior Muscle Growth*.

It covers every single major and minor aspect of how to set up your diet and weight training program, as well as every other relevant topic in between (maximizing muscle gains and minimizing body fat, the ideal surplus size, calorie cycling in a surplus, cardio during a muscle building phase, and much, much more). AND it includes an entire second book of weight training workouts, all of which are designed for building muscle.

Really, the best way I could describe *Superior Muscle Growth* is by telling you that it is to building muscle what *Superior Fat Loss* is to losing fat.

It's equally aimed at doing what works best, equally thorough and comprehensive, equally based on a combination of science and real-world results (rather than myths, gimmicks and nonsense), and equally written in a straight-forward and easy-to-understand manner that will provide you with all of the "what's," "how's," "when's," and "why's" of getting the best muscle building results possible.

It's equally ideal for **men** and **women**… **beginners**, **intermediates** and **advanced**… those who are **younger** and those who are **older**… and people whose genetics can be considered **average**, **above average** or **below average**. Throughout the book, different guidelines and recommendations are given based on each of these personal factors every time it's relevant to do so.

So, if you enjoyed *Superior Fat Loss* and are looking to switch your primary focus from losing fat to building muscle (right now or at any point in the future), I'd highly recommend checking out *Superior Muscle Growth*.

I think you'll like it.

CHAPTER 22

The End